Ministry of Housing and Local Government
Welsh Office

Council Housing Purposes, Procedures and Priorities

**Ninth report
of the Housing Management Sub-Committee
of the
Central Housing Advisory Committee**

London Her Majesty's Stationery Office 1969

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Housing Management Sub-Committee

Members.

Professor J. B. Cullingworth, BSc (Chairman)
Harry Brummitt, Esq., OBE
J. L. Burn, Esq., MD, DHy, DPH
Miss Elizabeth Burney, MA, BLitt*†
Mrs. Pauline Crabbe, JP*
Alderman Louis Glass, MB, ChB, JP*‡
Alderman I. Bowen Griffith, MBE, JP*
W. R. B. Johannes, Esq., BA(Econ), JP
Adrian M. Kelly, Esq., LLB*
John Ruscoe, Esq., MA, BCom, FIMTA, FRVA*
Miss M. R. Schofield, LLM, FIHM, JP
Julius Silverman, Esq., MP*
H. G. Simpson, Esq., OBE, FIHM, FSVA

Assessors:

A. MacC. Armstrong, Esq.,
Miss W. V. Hole, MA, PhD

Joint secretaries:

D. Fox, Esq., DMA, FIHM, AISW, ARSH
C. P. Taylor, Esq.,

Assistant Secretary:

P. E. Bellamy, Esq.,

*Co-opted members
†Now Mrs. Elizabeth Parker
‡Resigned on grounds of ill-health in October 1968

SBN 11 750207 3

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Contents

Introduction *Page* 1

Chapter 1

The changing context of council housing

The wider framework 3
The changing pattern of tenure 4
The use of housing space 6
Implications for policy 10
Local housing surveys 11
New powers and duties 12
Housing lists 14
The council housing stock 16
Rents and Rent Rebates 16

Chapter 2

The objectives of allocation policies

The statutory framework 18
Priorities 19
Social need 21
Community needs 23
The role of central government 24

Chapter 3

Advice and selection

Publicity and advice 26
Clearance and redevelopment areas 28
Assessment of applicants 30
The purposes of the home visit 34
Liaison with health and social work departments 35
The disabled 37
The assessment of need 38
Selection by officers or members 39
Types of selection scheme 40

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Date order schemes 41
Points schemes 42
'Merit' schemes 42
Combined schemes 43
Conclusion on selection schemes 43

Chapter 4

Residential qualifications

Previous reports 44
The 1955 report 44
The present position 45
The London situation 47
Public opinion 48
The relevant legislation 50
Areas of severe housing pressure 50
The case for residential qualifications 50
Points for residence and waiting 51
Points for time in housing need 52
Differing local housing situations 53
Our conclusions 54

Chapter 5

Exchanges and transfers

Previous reports and circulars 56
The objectives of policy in relation to exchanges and transfers 58
Definition of exchanges and transfers 59
Exchange bureaux 60
The London Government Act 61
Is underoccupation a 'problem'? 63
The Greater London Council occupancy survey 63
A better balance of dwelling types 66
Redecoration of vacated houses 68
Transfers of tenancy 68

Chapter 6

Housing and labour mobility

Regional differences 70
The role of local authorities 72
Information and advice 73
Tied council houses 74
Rehousing from tied houses 75
Ex-servicemen 75
Professional key workers 76

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Chapter 7

Rehousing obligations

The statutory framework 77
The practices of local authorities 79
'Alternative' accommodation 81
A redefinition of rehousing obligations 83
Publicity 86
Eviction of furnished tenants 86
Reduced compensation for owner-occupiers rehoused by local authorities 87
Removal expenses 90

Chapter 8

Some important needs

THE LARGE FAMILY 92
Provision for the large family 92
Acquisition, improvement and conversion of dwellings 93
Rent rebates 94
Rehousing at 'below-standard' density 94

THE ELDERLY 95
The scale of the need 95
Two-bedroom accommodation 97
Residential qualifications and the elderly 99
Elderly owner-occupiers 101
Income bars 101
Elderly people and 'housing need' 102

THE SINGLE 103
The increasing need 103
The desire for self-contained accommodation 104
The role of local authorities 105

STUDENTS 106
Married postgraduates 106
Vacations 108
Our recommendations 108

THE HOMELESS 108
The inadequate basis for policy 108
Definitions 109
The policies of local housing authorities in our sample 109
Eviction orders 111

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Arrears of rent 112
Rent guarantees 114

Chapter 9

Housing coloured people

The need for a policy 116
Current housing conditions 118
Housing tenure 120
The effect of local authority policies and practices 122
(i) Eligibility 122
(a) *Residential qualifications* 122
(b) *Tenure eligibility* 123
(c) *Household type eligibility* 123
(d) *Multiple ineligibility* 123
(ii) Assessment 124
(iii) Access 125
A case for positive discrimination? 129
Dispersal 130
Concentrations of coloured people 131
Dispersal as the aim of policy 133
Records 136
In conclusion 140

Chapter 10

A note on the London problem

The London housing situation 141
The industrial selection scheme 141
Need for further studies 142

Chapter 11

A note on new kinds of housing provision

New lines of policy 144
'Municipal bed-sitters' 145
Short-term tenancies 145
Scheme for newly married couples 145

Chapter 12

Summary of conclusions and recommendations 147

Appendix 1

List of organisations and individuals who gave evidence 163

Appendix 2

The sample of local authorities 167

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Appendix 3
Public meetings: experience in one local authority 171

Appendix 4
Matters to be discussed on a home visit 175

Appendix 5
A model publication for intending applicants 176

Appendix 6
The London Mutual Exchange Bureau 181

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Introduction

Terms of reference

1 We were appointed by the Central Housing Advisory Committee in February 1968 'to review the practice of housing authorities in allocating tenancies and rehousing and to suggest rules or principles to be followed in these matters' and held our first meeting in April 1968.

Membership

2 In order to secure a wider representation of experience, we invited Miss Elizabeth Burney, Mrs. Pauline Crabbe, Alderman Dr. Louis Glass, Alderman I. Bowen Griffith, Mr. Adrian Kelly, Mr. John Ruscoe and Mr. Julius Silverman to serve as co-opted members of the Sub-Committee.

3 Owing to ill-health, Alderman Dr. Louis Glass felt obliged to resign from the Sub-Committee in October 1968 after our seventh meeting. We wish to record our gratitude to Dr. Glass for his invaluable assistance during the earlier part of our inquiry.

Method of inquiry

4 We called for evidence by a general press notice and by invitation to selected individuals and organisations. A questionnaire was sent to 131 local authorities. A full list of those who gave evidence to us and an account of the sampling basis for the selection of local authorities are given in Appendices 1 and 2.

5 The Sub-Committee met on twenty-five days. We were asked to complete our work in about a year. This length of time proved to be inadequate and we are very conscious of the fact that our treatment of the various relevant issues is uneven. We have attempted to focus our attention on the main issues and have indicated where further study is required.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

References to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government and the Welsh Office

6 For the sake of brevity, we have confined our references in the report to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. Unless the sense implies otherwise all such references should be regarded equally as being references to the Welsh Office.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Chapter 1
The changing context of council housing

The wider framework

7 In our deliberations we found it essential to consider some fundamental questions on the role of local authorities in the current (and changing) housing situation. It is not adequate to suggest policies relating to the allocation of council houses before determining the purpose of council housing. Throughout our inquiry we were constantly brought face to face with the question 'what is council housing for?' Council housing, though of increasing importance, is only one of the sectors into which the total housing provision of this country is divided. We use the term 'divided' purposely. The most significant feature of housing provision in Britain is its division into a number of sectors each of which is affected, aided and controlled in different and frequently conflicting ways by Government. There is little relationship between the policies operated in relation to these different sectors. As a result major issues facing each sector stem from policies designed to deal with quite different issues in other sectors.

8 Following through the logic of our discussions on these and similar issues we immediately were faced with a dilemma. Our terms of reference referred only to council housing, but how were we to consider this adequately without looking at other agencies of housing provision and the policies operated in relation to them? Our dilemma was sharpened by the publication, shortly after we were appointed, of the Seebohm Report[1] which underlined the necessity for a 'thorough examination of the whole field of the allocation and subsidisation of housing'[2] and recommended that the responsibilities of local housing authorities should be widened:

'All housing authorities should, we consider, take a comprehensive and extended view of their responsibilities to meet the housing needs of their areas. In particular they should be generally concerned with assisting a family to obtain and keep adequate accommodation whether it be in the council house sector or not.'[3]

---

[1] *Report of the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services,* Cmnd. 3703, HMSO, 1968.

[2] *Op. cit.,* paragraph 400.

[3] *Op. cit.,* paragraph 390.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

9 In short we were asked to look at only one patch of a patchwork quilt. We were not asked to carry out an investigation into the changing housing situation and the ways in which housing needs could best be met. We could not look at broad issues such as the relationship between council housing and owner-occupation, or the impact of housing finance, subsidies and tax reliefs on the total housing situation. We were glad, however, to note that the Ministry is undertaking a study of housing finance in both the public and private sectors.[1] Our report may need reviewing in the light of any fundamental changes which result from this review. At the same time we hope that our report will assist in the wider review of housing policy of which the Ministry's study is a necessary part.

10 Our major objective, however, is to assist local housing authorities in dealing with current and emerging problems within the present framework. Local housing authorities are facing some very difficult problems: it would not be very helpful if we merely said that these problems could be more effectively handled if major changes were made in the overall framework. In any case, irrespective of the framework, some basic issues loom large in importance—for instance, the assessment of local housing needs, the relationship between what we term 'housing need' and 'social need', the position of publicly-provided housing in relation to economic policies, the problems faced by disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, and the role of central government in relation to local government. But perhaps the most important issue is the changing character of the housing situation. We think it will be useful if we illustrate this by examining two selected issues—the changing pattern of tenure and the changing use of housing space.

The changing pattern of tenure

11 In 1947, 73% of dwellings were rented: 61% from private landlords and 12% from public authorities. The remaining 27% were owner-occupied. Twenty years later, in spite of a major increase in council housing, the total supply of rented accommodation had declined proportionately to 50%. Privately rented dwellings had declined from 61% to 23%. These changes, which are shown in Table 1, are dramatic and the trends which they highlight appear to be continuing. Their importance lies in the fact that the alternatives to a council house facing a household wishing to rent (or unable to buy) a dwelling have declined greatly.

12 The position varies between different areas. Thus, for example,

---

[1] House of Commons Select Committee on Estimates, (Sub-Committee B), *Minutes of Evidence, 3rd March 1969, Session 1968-69, Housing Subsidies*, HMSO, 1969, page 165.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

in the West Midland Conurbation the privately rented sector had declined to 18% in 1966. Between 1961 and 1966 the number of privately rented unfurnished dwellings fell from 134,000 to 101,000; and the decline in furnished dwellings was from 12,300 to 7,700. Within smaller local housing market areas the changes can be even more significant.

13 There is no need to labour the point (though we stress the need for local assessments of the situation): the alternatives to a council house for those who are not able to buy a house are declining rapidly, particularly in areas of pressure. The character and impact of, and the reasons for, this decline are complex and are likely to vary somewhat in different areas.[1]

Table 1

Tenure of dwellings, England and Wales 1947–1967

	1947 %	1961 %	1966 %	1967 %
Owner-occupier	27	44	49	50
Public authority	12	25	27	27
Privately rented, etc.	61	31	24	23

Table 2

Number of dwellings and rooms by tenure, West Midlands conurbation 1961–1966

West Midlands Conurbation	Dwellings		Rooms	
	1961	1966	1961	1966
Owner-occupied	271,482	310,480	1,412,185	1,839,580
Public authority	251,298	284,070	1,074,485	1,381,120
Privately rented, unfurnished	134,173	101,300	630,093	551,860
Privately rented, furnished	12,351	7,710	53,057	41,230
Other tenures	22,078	19,310	105,430	106,300
All tenures	691,382	722,870	3,275,250	3,920,090

14 There are, however, two implications of the greatest importance to the question of the allocation of council houses. One relates to the groups of applicant which local authorities will accept on their housing lists and for whom they are willing to provide accommodation; the other relates to the responsibilities of local authorities in rehousing those displaced by public action. These issues are interrelated and in both cases the basic issue is the same: *local authorities*

[1] *Report of the Committee on Housing in Greater London,* Cmnd. 2605, HMSO, 1965, discussed the London situation at length. Some of the factors are national and demand statutory action; others may be specific to London.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

must take a wider responsibility for people who at one time would have been housed in the private sector.

The use of housing space

15 The Census provides a wealth of material on household composition, the size of households and of dwellings, and the use of housing space. It is not a difficult matter to obtain a detailed picture on the ways in which all these are changing. We have selected one factor for consideration: the use of housing space and the way in which this is affected by the size distribution of households and the stock of dwellings.

16 Housing space is, of course, only one feature of housing conditions. The Denington Committee[1] (who were concerned with the fabric, equipment and services of a house) noted that the measurement of housing conditions required separate procedures for evaluating five different aspects of housing quality:

(i) the structure and condition of housing (stability, damp, natural lighting, etc.)

(ii) the equipment and services built into housing (w.c., water supply, drainage, artificial lighting, etc.)

(iii) the quality of the surrounding environment (air pollution, noise, open space, traffic conditions, etc.)

(iv) the space available to individual households (persons per room, bedroom requirements, etc.)

(v) the privacy available in dwellings occupied by more than one household (sharing accommodation and facilities, sound insulation, etc.).

17 The Denington Report focused on the first two of these aspects and stressed the importance of the physical environment within which individual houses are located. The last two aspects were, however, outside their terms of reference, but they recommended that there should be a review of the present statutory overcrowding standard and the relationship between acceptable standards of occupancy and the standards for the structure and amenities of houses.[2] It does not fall to us to undertake this review, but the evidence we have received has led us to the conclusion that we should include in this report some discussion of standards of occupancy. Local authorities have traditionally regarded overcrowding as a major index of housing need. Indeed overcrowding is one of the few specific issues with which local authorities are statutorily required to deal. Furthermore, there is

---

[1] *Our Older Houses: A Call for Action,* Report of a Sub-Committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee, HMSO, 1966.

[2] *Op. cit.,* page 42.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

now an increasing concern with underoccupation which is of considerable significance to the allocation of council houses.

18 The Housing Act 1957, provides a statutory definition of overcrowding.[1] This definition was introduced by the Housing Act of 1935 and has not been changed since that time. Though the standard was, even in 1935, a very limited one, an overcrowding survey carried out under the 1935 Act showed that a third of a million out of the nine million dwellings inspected were statutorily overcrowded. In effect the standard operates in relation only to very large families living in average-sized houses, and average families living in small houses. It involves counting every habitable room as available for sleeping purposes. (Had living rooms been excluded in the survey under the 1935 Act the number of 'overcrowded' families would have risen to 853,000).

19 As a result of the far-reaching improvements in living standards and housing conditions since 1935 the statutory overcrowding standard has ceased to have relevance over the major part of the country. Only 80,000 households (0.5%) were overcrowded on this standard in 1964.[2] The standards now used by local authorities in selecting tenants on the basis of their overcrowding, though of immense variety, are generally considerably higher.

20 The ways in which space conditions are measured reflect the general living standards of a country at a particular time. With a very low standard the measurement may be in terms of square feet per person. A higher standard makes it appropriate to measure in terms of rooms. Today it is appropriate to consider standards in relation to the ability to undertake and separate functions or activities. Thus, the Parker Morris Committee, in the first chapter of their report (significantly entitled 'New Patterns of Living') underlined the fact that they were concerned 'not about rooms so much as about the activities that people want to pursue in their homes.'[3] In summary their argument was:

'The starting point for thinking about houses and flats must be the activities that people want to undertake in them. This approach to the problem of design starts with a clear recognition of these various activities and their relative importance in social, family and individual lives, and goes on to assess the conditions necessary for their pursuit in terms of space, atmosphere, efficiency, comfort, furniture and equipment.

Our recommendations are not therefore based on minimum room sizes but on functional requirements and levels of preference, with minimum overall sizes for the dwelling related to the size of family.'[4]

---

[1] Section 77 and Sixth Schedule.

[2] M. Woolf, *The Housing Survey in England and Wales 1964*, Government Social Survey, HMSO, 1967.

[3] *Homes for Today and Tomorrow*, Report of a Sub-Committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee, HMSO, 1961, page 2, paragraph 4.

[4] *Op. cit.*, page 49.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

21 The large drop in room-occupancy rates over the last fifty years is shown in Table 3. Up to 1951, the rate in most sizes of households either remained stable or changed only slightly. The change in the average rate up to 1951 is largely due to the increasing number of small households which were appearing; the really marked change affecting households of all sizes has only occurred since 1951. Of particular interest is the relatively high room-occupancy rate in the council house sector. This is, in part, due to the relatively high proportion of council houses which contain 4–6 rooms and the low proportion with 7 or more rooms.

22 This trend towards lower room-occupancy rates generally has brought about a revision in our concept of overcrowding – as evidenced by the thinking of the Parker Morris Committee. In terms of census data the definition of overcrowding was, until 1961, based on an occupancy rate of two or more persons per room (which has a good 'fit' with the statutory overcrowding standard); in 1961 this was lowered to one and a half persons per room. (In 1961 only 2.8% of households lived at a density greater than this; the proportion in 1966 had fallen to 1.2%). It is becoming increasingly questionable whether occupancy rates based simply on the ratio between persons and rooms are sufficiently sensitive to current needs.

23 Analysis of changes in the size distributions of households and dwellings since 1911 shows that, not only has there been a consistent trend towards smaller household sizes, but also a decline in the smaller and the largest dwellings. There has been a marked decline in the number of dwellings with more than five rooms, due to the concentration since 1920, in both the public and private sectors,

Table 3

Changes in Room-Occupancy Rates in England and Wales 1911–1966[1]

Persons in Household	Persons per Room					
	1911	1921	1931	1951	1961	1966
1	0·35	0·34	0·33	0·30	0·27	0·24
2	0·48	0·50	0·48	0·49	0·46	0·40
3	0·65	0·68	0·67	0·69	0·64	0·56
4	0·88	0·85	0·85	0·87	0·82	0·72
5	1·00	1·02	1·03	1·03	0·97	0·86
6–7	1·30	1·26	1·27	1·25	1·17	1·03
8–9	1·55	1·58	1·58	1·57	1·47	1·33
10 and over	1·83	1·73	1·67	1·90	1·82	1·65
Average	1·10	0·91	0·83	0·74	0·66	0·57

[1] see footnote on next page

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Table 4

Room-Occupancy Rates by Tenure, England and Wales, 1966

Persons in Household	Persons per Room		
	Owner occupiers	Council Tenants	Private Tenants (Unfurnished Accommodation)
1	0·19	0·27	0·24
2	0·37	0·45	0·42
3	0·52	0·61	0·61
4	0·67	0·78	0·78
5	0·80	0·93	0·93
6	0·90	1·09	1·07
7	1·01	1·25	1·20
8	1·12	1·39	1·37
9	1·22	1·53	1·49
10 and over	1·42	1·77	1·70
Average	0·52	0·70	0·53

Table 5

Households and Dwellings by Size, England and Wales 1931–1966[1]

Households

No. of Persons	1931 %	1951 %	1961 %	1966 %
1	6·7	10·7	13·4	15·4[2]
2	21·9	27·7	29·9	30·6
3	24·1	25·3	22·9	21·2
4	19·4	19·0	18·3	17·7
5	12·4	9·6	8·8	8·7
6 or more	15·5	7·7	6·7	6·6

Dwellings

No. of Rooms	1931 %	1951 %	1961 %	1966 %
1	0·5	0·8	0·9	0·6
2	4·1	3·9	3·6	2·8
3	10·8	11·3	10·0	8·9
4	25·4	28·1	27·1	24·0
5	27·2	35·2	37·3	37·1
6 or more	32·0	20·7	21·1	26·8

[1] In 1966, the Census definition of rooms was changed to include all kitchens (previously kitchens were counted only if used regularly for meals). As a result, in Table 3, the last column is not strictly comparable with the others. In Table 5, however, the 1966 figures are for rooms as defined in previous censuses.

[2] It should be noted that the 1966 Census tended to under-estimate one-person households.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

on the three-bedroom house. But the most striking statistic is that 46% of households in 1966 consisted of only one or two persons. It is this, and the large increase in five-room dwellings which accounts for much of the fall in room-occupancy rates.

Implications for policy

24 Two important issues arise from this discussion. First, in the past, discussions of occupancy rates have concentrated on definitions of overcrowding (to include sex separation for sleeping above certain ages, etc.) and an adequate standard of occupancy has emerged as something a little better than overcrowding. In practice this usually implied, in public housing, a single living room, and bedrooms occupied by no more than two persons of the same sex above the age of ten. While this approach was relevant in the 'thirties when a great deal of excessive overcrowding existed, it is no longer appropriate in the 'sixties when the trend generally has been towards lower occupancy rates. Certainly the statutory overcrowding standard cannot be considered relevant today. Where densities of occupation at or above this standard exist (as in the pressure areas of central London) they are symptomatic of a much more intransigent problem which can be dealt with only within a broader context of economic and social policies. More generally the issue is the 'standard' to be employed in determining an appropriate allocation of space for a family, having regard to positive needs rather than the negative approach of avoiding overcrowding. This is an issue which goes beyond our terms of reference. We have sketched some of the immediately obvious aspects of this and support the Denington Committee's recommendation for a review of this. In our opinion such a review can be satisfactorily undertaken only in the context of a far-ranging appraisal of current and emerging housing problems.

25 Secondly, an increasing concern is being expressed by local authorities on the 'problem' of underoccupation in council houses. In fact this is more prevalent and extensive in the private sectors, and above all in the owner occupied sector. The basic issue here is the relationship between the size distribution of households and dwellings. Above all, there is an increasing need for very small and very large dwellings. Local authorities are going some way to meeting the former, but very few large dwellings are being provided. We discuss these issues at various stages in our report.

26 Fewer houses to rent, an increasing dependence upon council housing, more single-person and elderly households, a decreasing supply of large family type houses—these are some of the major changes which are affecting the context within which local authorities have to formulate and operate their housing policies. Others are

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

dealt with in later chapters. All together they constitute a vastly different situation from that which existed when local authorities first started to provide houses on a significant scale in the inter-war years. They demand a radical reassessment of the adequacy of current policies. Our report is intended to assist in this reassessment, but we repeat that we can examine only a small part of a complex of inter-related issues. We also stress again the importance of adequate information on the local housing situation. Local 'contexts' differ and change in different ways and at different rates. If local housing authorities are to ensure that the needs of their areas are being met, they must know what these needs are and how they are changing.

Local housing surveys

27 Our review of current local policies convinces us that local authorities need to have a clearer, deeper and more detailed understanding of the changing housing situation in their areas. In recent years major improvements have been made in the information available to central government. The statistical services of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government have developed beyond recognition. National and regional housing surveys have provided a basis for policy which was previously lacking. (Compare, for instance, the differences between the information available to the framers of the 1957 Rent Act and the 1969 Housing Bill). The impact on policy has been significant. To cite an obvious example, it is important for policy to know whether the number of unfit houses in the country is 800,000 (the 'official' figure in 1965) or 1,800,000 (the figure based on the House Condition Survey of 1966). The new impetus given to 'improvement' policies stems very largely from a better understanding of the housing situation.

28 At the local level, however, policy has often to be based on inadequate information. This is increasingly recognised, not only by the local authorities who are finding that applicants are 'more choosey', but also more generally. As the Institute of Housing Managers stated in their evidence to us, 'before any local authority can consider either broad priorities or individual needs it needs to be armed with detailed information about demand, present and future, in its area and to have some idea of the resources likely to be available'. Without this, local authorities will repeatedly find that they are catering for needs which have already been met, or are ignoring other needs which have not come to their attention. The realization of the scale of the shortage of dwellings for elderly people and the difficulties being experienced in formulating a policy in relation to the housing of immigrants are cases in point.

29 The Milner Holland Committee—like the Herbert Commission

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

before them—argued that local authorities needed strong and adequately staffed intelligence units. Policies on housing can be adequately forged only in relation to the total situation of which housing forms a part, and both require economic, sociological, statistical and demographic intelligence;

'the information needed must include assessments of the physical condition, potential life and capability of improvement of London housing; the consequences of possible industrial and commercial location policies and the resulting changes in the size and distribution of population; the past and probable future course of changes in the age distribution and other features of the population's structure, and the formation, movement and dissolution of households; and information about earnings, household incomes, rents and housing costs'.[1]

30 On this, our own conclusions are the same as those of the Milner Holland Committee. Above all we endorse their warning against drawing conclusions from studies of the London situation for other parts of the country. The Committee suggested that 'many of the problems of London may be special to London'. Our own evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates how true this is. Indeed, it is clear that we do not have a single 'national' housing problem: we have a large number of local housing problems of great variety. National housing policies, slum clearance campaigns and new building drives are no longer adequate to meet this new situation. Local and regional policies need to be forged to deal appropriately with particular problems. And these must be based on an understanding of these problems and the context in which they arise. Of particular importance for local housing authorities are long-term trends in the housing situation: the decline in the privately rented housing market (though extremely important in this connection) is only one of such trends which has a major impact on the role to be played by local authorities.

New powers and duties

31 *Our first recommendation is, therefore, that local authorities should take steps to ensure that they are better informed of the housing situation of their areas and the factors affecting it.* The Housing Act 1957 should be amended to extend the powers and duties of local authorities in this respect. At present section 91 provides that:

'It shall be the duty of every local authority to consider housing conditions in their district and the needs of the district with respect to the provision of further housing accommodation and for that purpose to review the information which has been

[1] *Report of the Committee on Housing in Greater London*, Cmnd. 2605, HMSO 1965, page 26.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

brought to their notice, either as a result of inspections carried out under Part I of this Act or otherwise, and as often as occasion arises, or within three months after notice has been given to them by the Minister, to prepare and submit to the Minister proposals for the provision of new houses, distinguishing those houses which the authority proposed to provide for the purpose of rendering accommodation available for persons to be displaced by, or in consequence of, action taken by the authority under this Act.'

32 This provision is now inadequate. It was designed to deal essentially with the responsibilities of local authorities in relation to unfit housing. Though recent national housing surveys have shown that the problem of unfit housing is far larger and more widespread than had been commonly appreciated (and officially recognised) it is only one of a number of housing problems and its extent varies enormously between different local authority areas. In our view it is important not only to have information relating to the quality of old houses on which a slum clearance programme is to be based, but also sufficient information on the overall housing situation to permit the formulation of a comprehensive local housing policy. The seriousness of the slum problem and its claim to priority can be assessed only in relation to other problems.

33 Local authorities have a specific duty, under the Housing Act 1957, in relation to overcrowding. Section 76 provides:

'If it appears to a local authority that occasion has arisen for a report on overcrowding in their district, or any part thereof, . . . or the Minister so directs, it shall be the duty of the authority to cause a further inspection to be made and to prepare and submit a report showing the result of the inspection and the number of new houses required to abate overcrowding in the district or the part of the district and, unless they are satisfied that the required number of new houses will be otherwise provided, to prepare and submit to the Minister proposals for the provision thereof.'

This provision is now outdated. Though overcrowding still remains a problem in some areas (and is particularly acute in a small number of areas—where it is commonly associated with what is now termed 'multi-occupation') more generally there is little overcrowding problem of the type which was common in the 'thirties and which originally gave rise to this statutory provision. Indeed, many local authorities are giving much thought to widespread 'underoccupation'. More accurately, the problem is beginning to be seen as one of 'matching' the size-distribution of dwellings and households. But since the size-distribution of households changes much more rapidly than is possible with the size-distribution of dwellings, it is important that policies should be based on an adequate understanding of the dynamics of the situation. This in turn requires a more comprehensive and flexible approach than is usually adopted today.

34 During the course of our deliberations the Housing Bill 1969 was published. We note that this contains a new provision for the 'review of housing conditions by local authorities':

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

'It shall be the duty of every local authority (within the meaning of the enactments mentioned in this section) to cause an inspection of their district to be made from time to time with a view to determining what action to take in the performance of their functions under Part II or III of the Act of 1957, Part II of the Housing Act 1961, section 20 or Part IV of the Housing Act 1964 or Part II of this Act, and for the purpose of carrying out that duty the authority and their officers shall comply with any directions the Minister may give and shall keep such records and supply him with some information as he may specify.'

35 If passed into law this section effectively extends the 'housing survey' duties of local authorities in connection with lack of repair or maintenance, the sanitary condition of dwellings, houses in multiple occupation, tenement blocks, and the need for clearance, redevelopment and area improvement. This extension of duties has been introduced because of the current concern with the upkeep and improvement of the existing housing stock. It may be expected that, at some future time, concern with other housing policy issues (e.g. rents or the needs of particular groups of the population) will lead to a further extension of 'housing survey' functions. In our view it would be preferable and more realistic if local authorities had a wide general duty to survey the overall housing situation in their areas.

36 In making these surveys local authorities need to have regard to total community needs. This is particularly the case in very large areas of redevelopment or new housing. A healthy community requires a range of age-groups, skills and occupations. Policy must be geared to ensuring that teachers, doctors, dentists, social workers, and other community workers can live in the community which they serve. Unless opportunities are provided for these and similar people to live in the community (whether as owner-occupiers, housing society tenants and members, or as local authority tenants) social life and the public and social services will be permanently impoverished.

Housing lists

37 At present many local authorities lay great store by 'housing lists'. These are inadequate in many ways. They may give an inflated idea of the total need for council housing and encourage local authorities to carry on building when in fact there may be a developing situation in which local authority building should be cut back. In many areas, however, their inadequacy may be quite different. Even given regular review (which presents its own problems) housing lists give a measure only of the articulated demand for council housing, but they relate only to the demand which is expressed by way of an application to the council, and only to needs which are recognised by the council as falling to their responsibility.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Virtually all local authorities operate *some* rules of eligibility and the more significant and numerous these are, the more limited will be the housing list as a measure of local housing need. But *beliefs* about the rules operated by a local authority may be equally if not more important. We were, for instance, told by one local authority of a rehousing scheme involving the rehousing of a number of coloured families which led to a sudden upsurge in applications from coloured families, many of whom had not appreciated that they were eligible for council housing.

38 Major needs may not be expressed in the housing list for other reasons. The widespread shortage of dwellings for the elderly, for example, stems not only from the priority given to young families, but also from the fact that the elderly tend to have too much rather than too little accommodation and thus do not appear to be in 'housing need'.

39 The range of council housing available will also affect the needs as indicated in a housing list. There is, for instance, relatively little council housing available for single people—particularly single men. As a result few single men appear on housing lists. More fundamentally there arises the question of the *role* of local housing authorities. We are urging that their responsibilities should extend far beyond providing for the needs of those who are to be actually housed by them. Indeed, unlike the private sector, which is concerned with immediate market demands, local housing authorities should be looking for hidden needs, for needs which are not being met elsewhere and for needs which may arise in the future. For example, the decline in the number of larger old houses is frequently accepted as a satisfactory concomitant of the decline in the number of large families, but in many areas this process has gone so far as to make it difficult for large families to obtain the accommodation they need—particularly since few large houses are being built by local authorities. (One local authority which gave evidence to us stated that 'the Corporation does not have houses large enough for large families', yet the demolition and conversion programme in the same town was resulting in a reduction of the number of houses which *were* 'large enough'.)

40 We discuss these specific issues at various points in our report. Here we are concerned to stress the general issue of the need for comprehensive information of the housing situation. In our view *ad hoc* surveys are not enough. Nor would something on the lines of the quinquennial review originally required under post-war town and country planning legislation meet the situation. Indeed, the recent repeal of the provisions requiring a quinquennial review underlines the point we are making. This has now been replaced, in the Town and Country Planning Act 1968, by a concept of a 'continuous review'. It is significant that the survey provisions of the new act

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

are to be found in the very first section: everything follows from the survey. It is this concept which is needed in the field of housing. Local authorities will need guidance on this.[1]

The council housing stock

41 We are concerned with the allocation of council houses, but clearly it is of importance to look at the types of houses which councils have available to allocate. Nationally the majority of council houses are of 'medium' size: four-fifths have three to five rooms. In terms of bedrooms, 57% have three, and 28% have two. Only 12% have one bedroom and only 3% have four or more.[2] These figures underline the point frequently made in the evidence submitted to us by local authorities: the shortage of single bedroom and four or more bedroom accommodation.

42 The situation does, however, vary between different authorities. Thus, while the London Borough of Westminster has only 11% of four-bedroom council built houses, the Greater London Council has 8%. With one-bedroom dwellings the variations are very large indeed—from one per cent to over twenty per cent. These differences may, of course, reflect in part the differing demands made on local authorities, but the evidence strongly suggests that a large number of local authorities have found that the size-distribution of their stock does not match the needs which they are currently seeking to satisfy. Still less does it match the totality of needs which ought to be met. We return to this point at a number of places in later chapters.

Rents and rent rebates

43 Rent policies do not fall to be considered within our terms of reference except to the extent that they affect allocations. Our concern is particularly with the impact of rent policies on low-income groups. If a local authority operates a rent policy which involves minimum rents above the level which low income groups (not eligible for rent-assistance from the Supplementary Benefits Commission) can afford, an important category of need is excluded, irrespective of formal allocation policies.

---

[1] The type of guidance we have in mind is illustrated by *Urban Housing Market Analysis,* U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966. This document, furnishing 'guidelines to help communities evaluate their own housing needs', is, of course, designed for the very different market conditions in the United States, but is a model which could be very usefully adapted.

[2] Estimates based on the Summary Table in *Housing Statistics (England and Wales), 1966–67,* Institute of Municipal Treasurers and Accountants, 1968.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

44 It was not, however, for us to embark on a detailed study of this extremely varied and complex field, which, in any case, has recently been investigated by the National Board for Prices and Incomes.[1] The Board's inquiry concluded that 'while local authorities have gone some way towards meeting the needs of the lowest income group, a proportion of these still live in private rented accommodation and that by and large the occupants of local authority houses reflect in their average earnings the average for the country as a whole'.[2]

45 In our sample of local authorities nearly one-third do not operate a rent rebate scheme. But rent rebates schemes vary enormously and some are very limited in scope. For instance one northern county borough has a scheme which applies only to houses built since January 1968 and provides for a minimum weekly net rent of 53s. 9d. At the other extreme are schemes where the minimum net rent is purely nominal (e.g. one shilling) or even nil. Nineteen of our sample of local authorities have schemes where the lowest rebated rent for three-bedroom houses is thirty shillings or more, and three where it is fifty shillings or more.

46 From our rapid review of rent and rent rebate policies we conclude that the majority of local authorities are operating schemes which do not prevent low-income families from becoming and remaining council tenants. There is, however, a number whose rent policies may constitute an unsurmountable barrier to such families. *We therefore recommend, in line with the Ministry rent rebate circular,*[3] *that local authorities should 'ensure that tenants with low income or large families (or both) are not asked to pay higher rents than they can reasonably afford'.* Needy families who require heavily subsidised rents may be deterred from applying for a council house if they are ignorant of the rent rebates for which they could be eligible. *We also recommend that local authorities should give the maximum publicity to their rent rebate schemes, not only among existing council tenants, but generally.*

---

[1] National Board for Prices and Incomes, Report No. 62, *Increases in Rents of Local Authority Housing,* Cmnd. 3604, and *Statistical Supplement,* Cmnd. 3604–I, HMSO, 1968.

[2] Op. cit., paragraph 55.

[3] Ministry of Housing and Local Government Circular No. 46/47, Welsh Office Circular No. 41/67 *Rent Rebate Schemes.*

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Chapter 2
The objectives of allocation policies

The statutory framework

47 Local authorities have a duty under Section 113 of the Housing Act 1957 to give reasonable preference, in selecting their tenants, to persons who are occupying insanitary or overcrowded houses, have large families or are living under unsatisfactory housing conditions. Within these very broad obligations local authorities have virtually complete autonomy in the selection of tenants for their houses.

48 One of the main purposes of local authority housing has always been to meet the needs of lower income groups. Until 1949 local authorities were statutorily restricted to providing houses for 'the working classes', but this term was never defined. By the late nineteen-forties it was generally agreed that this statutory limitation was outdated. As in other fields of social policy the principle was accepted that the social services should be comprehensive rather than restricted to particular income groups. The implications of this universalist approach were not thoroughly thought out, and indeed have only in recent years attracted widespread debate.

49 Local authorities now have wide responsibilities not only in meeting general housing needs and rehousing from clearance and redevelopment areas, but also in implementing planning policies in relation to the dispersion of population from the congested conurbations. More recently the development of regional economic policies has brought even wider considerations to bear on local authority housing policies.

50 The original function of providing housing for low income groups has thus now broadened to encompass a very wide range of housing needs. It is a general rule that the greater the range of needs for which a service is catering the greater the difficulty of determining priorities. It helps little to state that priority should be given to those in the greatest need : this begs the question as to the criteria which are to be employed in determining need. Furthermore 'housing need' is not the same as the need for publicly provided housing. Many households in housing need are able to meet their needs in the

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

private sectors. Should a distinction be made between these households and those who are unable (for reasons of inadequate incomes or otherwise) to obtain access to satisfactory accommodation in the private sectors? Should it be a principle that priority ought to be given to those who are the least able to house themselves?

Priorities

51 This issue receives surprisingly little discussion among those concerned with housing policy and administration and we received remarkably little evidence on it. The bulk of our evidence was concerned with the relative claims of those in different types of housing need rather than the relative claims of different types of family with the same housing need. It is perhaps significant that the most thoughtful writing on the issue is to be found in the report of a committee concerned with personal social services rather than specifically with housing.[1] We think it is useful to quote at length from the Seebohm Report:

"Families in greatest need

396 In addition to a broader interpretation of their housing responsibilities we consider housing departments should pay more attention to families in greatest need. Some families are at greater risk than others of becoming homeless or grossly ill-housed; for instance, the very young family, the large family with a low income or the fatherless family. They are not numerous; for example, only 8 per cent of all households in England and Wales contain three or more children and only 2 per cent five or more. About 2 per cent of households comprise fatherless families and many of them, and many large families as well, are already adequately housed. Although the proportion of families who are particularly vulnerable is small the problem is urgent. If it is set aside by local authorities, not only may families be endangered but considerable social costs incurred to the community.

397 At present there are particular difficulties facing such families in obtaining a council house. Two are especially important. First. they tend to be mobile (or, as with immigrants, they have been mobile) and to gravitate to areas of greatest housing need which are also generally areas with a high demand for labour. As a result they may find it difficult to get on to a housing list, or be given a low priority, because they lack residential qualifications. Second, because they are often poor, they may not be able to afford the rents of the council houses offered them.

398 We recognise that the Housing Act 1957 requires local authorities to give reasonable preference to large families, amongst other groups, when allocating houses. Successive Ministers of Housing and Local Government, endorsing recommendations of the Central Housing Advisory Committee, have also urged local authorities to look critically at allocation schemes involving residential quali-

---

[1] *Report of the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services*, Cmnd. 3703, HMSO, 1968.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

fications, to introduce rent rebate schemes to assist poorer tenants,[1] and to provide for special groups such as unmarried mothers. Nevertheless, the problem remains of vulnerable families who have little hope of getting (or, in some cases, keeping) a council house for a long time. The problem is not solved by leaving certain families to fend for themselves, or shuttle between accommodation for homeless families, "half-way housing", unlicensed caravan sites, unsatisfactory lodgings and the streets.

399 The problem of the family which cannot really afford council housing, or which is not thought fit or qualified to have it must be faced. The present methods of subsidising housing do not necessarily help families to obtain accommodation appropriate to their needs. The distribution of subsidies is inequitable and in large measure accidental, being based on categories of housing rather than need. Within local authorities the adoption of rent rebate arrangements can help if they are framed to give maximum benefit to the poorer tenants; we hope such schemes become more widespread."

52 We have had these issues continually in mind during our deliberations and broadly support the approach of the Seebohm Committee. At the same time the quotation underlines the wider issues involved (to which we make reference in Chapter 1). It is not without good reason that the Seebohm Committee urged the need for 'a thorough examination of the whole field of the allocation and subsidisation of housing'. Our remit requires us to confine our attention to only one aspect of this, but adequate policies can be determined only in the wider context.

53 In a very real sense the question of the priority to be attached to particularly needy groups of people (as distinct from categories of housing need) has been confused by the very extensive role now played by local authorities in the total provision of housing. In the evidence we received from local authorities attention was focused on their wide range of responsibilities and the categorisation of housing need. Little thought was given to vulnerable groups living in the private sector on the implicit ground that their problems receive fair priority within general policies directed towards meeting housing need.

54 The extensive role of local housing authorities must be stressed. More than four million households in England and Wales now live in council houses. This is over a quarter of all households; in some areas the proportion is much higher. Each year local authorities allocate about 350,000 houses: about 145,000 to existing council tenants transferring to different houses and over 200,000 to households living in the private sector or without separate accommodation. Looking at the situation in another way, of the 1½ million households who move each year, about a quarter are housed by local authorities.

55 Though we are precluded by our terms of reference from carrying

---

[1] For example, Ministry of Housing and Local Government Circular No. 46/67, Welsh Office Circular No. 41/67, *Rent Rebate Schemes.*

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

further the type of thinking expressed in the Seebohm Report (or even of examining it), there is a number of issues highlighted by this Committee which fall clearly within our remit. We refer particularly to their recommendation that local authorities should 'take increased responsibility for housing the most vulnerable families . . . These are the families least able to make arrangements and to negotiate with private landlords'.[1]

Social need

56 In our view it is not sufficient that local authorities should give priority to 'housing need' as measured by objective factors such as overcrowding, sharing and the like. These indices, important though they are, give only a partial picture. Different economic and social situations in which different families live must also be taken into account. We are not suggesting that more affluent council tenants should be evicted or that council housing should be reserved for the poor. There are social advantages in having a broad spectrum of social classes living in a community and we certainly would not wish to see an official encouragement to a policy of income segregation. (The actual rents paid by tenants with different incomes is quite a different matter). Our point is simply that in allocating council houses local authorities should give particular attention to those with incomes which are low in relation to their needs.

57 More difficult in some ways is the problem of the family occupying adequate accommodation which is too expensive for them. Such a family might be helped by a housing advice service to obtain cheaper accommodation, but (especially in London) such accommodation might be difficult or even impossible to obtain outside the council house sector. It is not easy for a local authority to allocate scarce housing to such families when there are so many others living in inadequate housing. Yet the problem facing the adequately housed family may be greater than that facing the inadequately housed, and their ability to solve their problem themselves may be less.

58 There is no simple way of judging conflicting claims such as this. As one Housing Manager put it to us:

"I could produce an example of the consequences of a family having come to an area, having found employment, having to pay a rent which frustrated the reasonable living conditions of that family for years ahead, and I am quite sure that everyone would agree that this was a case where the council should offer accommodation. I could at the same time produce a case of a family paying one-tenth of that rent, but who were living under conditions which were so grim that again

---

[1] *Report of the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services,* Cmnd. 3703, HMSO, 1968, paragraph 407.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

no-one would have any hesitation at all in saying that they must be offered accommodation. It is when you have got to choose between the two that you reach the stage of how you weigh the balance."

But an issue on which it is difficult to adjudicate cannot for that reason be ignored. We cannot lay down in detail how individual cases should be judged: what we do wish to do is to state clearly that factors such as the economic circumstances of a family should be taken into consideration by local authorities in determining their allocation policies. In many areas of the country, outside London, there are increasing opportunities for house purchase and even for renting from other bodies at a reasonable rent. In London, the competition for all types of housing is such that the situation is different in kind. This makes the principle we are seeking to establish much more difficult to apply, but at the same time it makes it more important. (We have a number of points to raise on the particular difficulties of London in a later chapter.)

59 Our wider conception of 'housing need', however, embraces more than economic circumstances. There are also social circumstances which, though often complicated by inadequate income, demand attention in their own right—the fatherless family, the family with a mentally ill mother, and that highly diverse group which are termed 'problem families'. Such families frequently lack the social skills required to obtain and keep good housing in the private sector. And, in any case, those with the power of choosing who shall live in the private sector may well not want them. Unfortunately, publicly accountable local authorities may not want them either: it is not easy for a council to justify to its electorate the rehousing of families in arrears of rent, unmarried mothers or, indeed, any group which does not conform to the accepted canons of good behaviour. Yet these are often the very people (and electors) whose social needs demand attention by local authorities. Unlike others who may be judged to have a stronger moral claim on the local authority, their only opportunity to obtain good housing may be via the local authority.

60 At the same time, to the extent that their mode of life is judged to be inadequate and in need of change, the tenancy of a council house provides a base on which the personal social services can build. It is unfortunate that all too often our society unwittingly raises unsurmountable barriers for those whom we seek to assist. (A case was quoted to us of a family living in a highly rented house who were in urgent need of a lower rented council house: their turn for rehousing had arrived but the local authority refused to rehouse until the arrears had been paid off. In this area no new tenancies could be granted to those with outstanding arrears. As a result the family were denied the solution to the precise problem which was facing them. They were eventually evicted and the children taken into care by the local authority.)

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

61 Perhaps more persuasive than principles is finance. We hold no simple-minded views on the effect of good housing on behaviour, but we do point out that bad housing greatly increases the difficulties facing families who are unable to cope with the every-day problems of maintaining a home and rearing children. Such families need more help than those better able to cope. Without good housing their problems tend to increase and, as a result, their calls on the personal social services mount. The financial implications of this can be serious. It is good financial policy as well as good social policy to ensure that priority in the allocation of council houses is given to the most socially needy groups.

62 There is a widespread fear among housing managers that policies of this type will encourage others to worsen their position or discourage some from improving their position. (The same argument is heard in relation to liberal policies for the homeless and even to the publication of points schemes). We are convinced that these fears are greatly exaggerated. The fear of 'queue-jumping' can paralyse effective action in the very areas where it is most needed. So far as discouraging some from improving their conditions is concerned, we suspect that this is also exaggerated; and to the extent that it is true it constitutes a sad commentary on our housing policies. Policy should be directed towards helping people to improve their housing situation. The allocation of a council house should be only one of the means of doing this. The paradox today is that though there is greater choice in an increasing range of goods and services, choice in housing is declining. For a family wishing to rent (or unable to buy) a good quality house the position is rapidly approaching when there is no alternative to a council house. Hence the importance of establishing a claim for a council house and the temptation to wait and not to jeopardise the chance of a council house by improving one's situation. It is difficult to say how prevalent deliberate 'waiting' is, but clearly there is always this possibility. The implications are far wider than we can encompass within our restricted inquiry.

Community needs

63 Our whole approach in this report calls upon local authorities to take a more comprehensive view of their responsibilities. The 'social needs' with which local authorities are concerned cannot be confined to housing needs alone. If the needs for education, health and other social and community services are to be adequately met, local authorities must ensure that those who man these services have opportunities of finding homes within the areas they serve. Many of the professional people concerned may prefer to buy houses early in their careers and thus an area consisting entirely of council houses

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

cannot provide the housing they want. These needs must be the responsibility of local authorities, though actual provision may be made in a variety of ways.

The role of central government

64 Local authorities will vary in the extent to which they are able to adjust their housing policies and procedures to the new context we have outlined. We believe that central government has an important part to play in assisting this adjustment. This is not a plea for greater central control. Most of those who raised this matter with us stressed the importance of local discretion and the inadvisability of greater central control. We agree: indeed, our view is that more central control could prove less effective than the present system. Those who put to us a case for greater central control (as a means for achieving greater uniformity, for preventing discrimination against particular groups or for ensuring greater equity) make the mistake of comparing the disadvantages of 'what is' with the assumed advantages of 'what might be'. The need is for a clearer lead from central government, not greater control.

65 This will not of course eliminate all the inadequacies in the present system of local authority housing which are indicated in other sections of our report. But when the inadequacies are analysed many clearly stem from the faults of the framework within which local housing authorities operate (which are outside our terms of reference) and from shortcomings in the legislation (which we suggest requires amendment).

66 Other 'inadequacies' are essentially a matter of opinion. Local authorities have a difficult task in weighing the many claims which are made on them. It is impossible to do justice to all claims. We have been struck by the careful and responsible approach adopted by the majority of local authorities. They have a formidable task, and they have tackled it with considerable success. Furthermore, to have provided over three million new houses since the war, and demolished $\frac{3}{4}$ million slums (involving the rehousing of over two million people) since 1955, is no mean achievement.

67 On the other hand, some four million households are now tenants of local authorities and the quality of housing management thus directly affects a quarter of the population. Furthermore, with the decline in the privately rented sector an increasing proportion of people are looking to the public sector as the only means of obtaining satisfactory housing. In this situation and with the rapid changes that are likely to take place in housing conditions and aspirations in the future we see the need for local authorities to keep well abreast of changing 'purposes, procedures and priorities' (to quote the title

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

which we have given to our report). At present, central government plays a relatively tiny and peripheral role in the matters with which this report is concerned. We think it is relevant to record that while there are over 150 professional staff in the Ministry of Housing and Local Government concerned with housing construction, there is only *one* who is concerned with housing management.

68 We would certainly not wish central government to assume the same sort of detailed control of housing allocations and other management policies as it applies at present to building design and costs. What we envisaged is totally different; a strengthening of the Ministry's advisory functions, to assist local authorities to keep up with current thinking on housing policy and the best in management at a time when social and economic changes are taking place on a broad front. *We, therefore, recommend that the housing management advisory functions of the Ministry be strengthened.* This will involve the appointment of some additional staff. We recognise the difficulty of this recommendation in view of the present need to restrict public expenditure.

69 The role of this advisory service should be to give guidance, encouragement and stimulus where needed. The advisers will have no monopoly of wisdom, but they will be in touch with a wide range of policies and practices and will be able to spread ideas and information of value from one area to another. We think that a strengthening of this service would be helpful to local authorities as an aid in spreading good practices. It implies no sanction other than the normal persuasive pressure which it is already open to the Ministry to apply.

70 We also think the central government could provide a useful lead by collecting more information from housing authorities on such matters as housing allocations and the make-up of housing lists of people in need (the elderly, people from multi-occupied dwellings, large families, etc.). This is the kind of information which in future we hope local authorities will be collecting for themselves anyway. We envisage that this information should be published in the same way in which statistics of house building, improvement grants and so forth, already are. We have already stated our conviction that policy needs to have a far firmer factual base than is currently the case. Planning departments are developing on these lines and will do so even more rapidly as the 1968 Town and Country Planning Act comes into operation. A similar development is required for housing (and social service) departments. The assistance needed on this could be provided via an expanded housing management advisory service.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Chapter 3
Advice and selection

71 In this chapter we discuss the important role to be played by advice, information and publicity; and the selection procedures to be used in relation both to applicants and those to be rehoused from clearance and redevelopment areas.

72 We received a great deal of critical comment on the inadequacy of information, the difficulties facing households who could not find out when they were to be rehoused, the apparent shroud of secrecy which often surrounds selection procedures, and the lack of advice on what alternatives were open to those in need.

73 It is no answer to this criticism to point out that local authorities have a difficult job to do, that it is often not possible to give accurate information since there are so many indeterminate factors and so much outside the control of local authorities, and that they have to operate within limiting legal constraints. All these points are true, but their implication is that local authorities have to try to surmount these difficulties in order to provide the information which people have the right to expect and the advice which they need.

74 We hope that the Skeffington Committee on Public Participation in Planning will have some relevant things to say on this. Though their focus is somewhat different from ours, the issue is, to a large extent, the same.

Publicity and advice

75 The first requirement of any public activity is publicity: the provision of full information on policies, priorities and procedures, on the rights and duties of all those concerned, and on the ways in which further information and advice can be obtained. It should go without saying that details of selection schemes should be freely available. Yet we were surprised to find that over a quarter of the local authorities in our sample treated their detailed selection schemes as being confidental. At the other extreme, however, (which we applaud) was Port Talbot Borough Council which publish their points scheme in the local newspaper and Teesside County Borough Council which publish a very helpful booklet giving 'a question and answer guide

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

to the points scheme relating to applications and transfers for housing accommodation'.[1] *We attach such importance to the publication of methods of selection that we recommend that this should be a statutory duty on local authorities.*

76 Publicity, however, is not enough. Steps have to be taken to ensure that information and advice reaches those who need it. Essentially this means a closer relationship between housing departments and social work departments, as well as voluntary organisations and community groups. In large authorities, area officers can help, particularly if they are allied to other departments and services.

77 Our thinking on this issue is on the same lines as that of the Seebohm Committee and we quote again from their Report:

"If the social service department is to be geared to its community tasks, then the senior staff, and especially the head of department, will have to demonstrate this community focus in the way in which they carry out their functions within and outside the organisation. This entails building up knowledge about the community and its needs, a commitment to encouraging community participation, mobilising voluntary resources and developing skill in working with many people outside the department in common efforts to contribute to community well-being. Specifically, this depends upon developing and utilising research and intelligence services, of cementing links with other local authority departments, with central government departments, other statutory bodies, voluntary organisations and informal groups of many kinds. Such links will be vital to the joint planning and allocation of resources everywhere but especially if "social development areas" are to come into being.

In the area team the head of the area office, in parallel with the head of the department, will need to see his function as relating the office to the local community as well as providing the established social services and managing its internal organisation. Close working relationships with organisations and institutions in the neighbourhood will be essential if resources are to be used to the full and if need is to be detected at an early stage. Once again, the success of "social development areas" will depend largely upon the work of the area team of the social service department in gaining, with other organsiations, the participation of citizens of the area in concentrated efforts to ameliorate adverse social conditions, expose defects in the services and decide upon priorities."[2]

78 Essentially this means a new approach on the part of the housing service: instead of dealing with 'applicants' the housing department has to become a truly local and community service seeking to establish local needs and assist in meeting these. We are fully aware that this may lead to the housing advice service recommended by the Seebohm Committee. This requires fuller consideration, but lies outside our terms of reference.

---

[1] See Appendix 5.

[2] *Report of the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Services,* Cmnd. 3703, HMSO, 1968, paragraphs 502 and 504.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Clearance and redevelopment areas

79 In clearance and redevelopment areas the need for easy access to information, advice and frequently reassurance is particularly important. It will become even more so if our recommendations on rehousing obligations are implemented. Here above all, people need to know what is happening—not only in general terms to the area, but specifically to them. We do not underestimate the problems and uncertainties facing the local authority. The assembly of sufficient land suitable for a large scale housing programme demands long term planning and the studies which must precede recommendations to a local authority cannot be disclosed to the general public without risk of planning blight. The first indication to the man in the street that he is living in an area which is to be cleared for redevelopment is most likely to be a report in his local newspaper containing proposals reported to the council meeting recommending compulsory acquisition. The time table for acquisition by compulsory purchase may take two to three years from the first announcement until there has been a public enquiry and a decision from the Minister, followed by the final six weeks period for objection on legal grounds, to the time when the local authority can take possession. The eventual rehousing from a large site may well take a further twelve to eighteen months.

80 We wholeheartedly support the philosophy of the Town and Country Planning Act 1968, which envisages a greater degree of citizen participation in the planning process. In the words of the White Paper:

> 'People must be able to participate fully in the planning process, and their rights must be safeguarded . . . One of the Government's main aims in the present reviews of planning legislation is to ensure that there are greater opportunities for the discussion of important changes while they are still at the formative stage and can be influenced by the people whose lives they will affect."[1]

A similar approach is required in relation to clearance and redevelopment carried out under the Housing Acts in so far as this will not be affected by the 1968 Planning Act.

81 Those to be affected by a scheme for clearance must be informed from the earliest moment (and kept informed) of what is to happen to them, what choices will be open to them, and what their rights and obligations are. Above all, people will want to know when and where they are moving. Public meetings can be a great help and we produce in Appendix 3 a note on the experience of one local authority which we think is helpful. But such meetings need to be followed up by personal meetings with those affected. Some local authorities set up a local office in the area where people can obtain

[1] *Town and Country Planning*, Cmnd. 3333, HMSO, 1967, paragraph 10.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

information and advice. We think this is an excellent way of providing help, but the staff must be in a position to give the information and advice needed. Such close contact with those who are to be affected by a clearance scheme is also of real value to the local authority in that it can assist in determining the redevelopment plan for the area and the type of provision which is needed.

82 An earlier report of the Housing Management Sub-Committee dealt specifically with this and we wholly endorse what they say:

'The better the members of the housing department know the families to be moved, the more likely are they to consider and meet their requirements. This knowledge can be acquired only in the course of a number of visits and if the local authority have acquired the properties in advance of actual rehousing they can be managed by the housing department, and personal contact with the occupants thus established. In other cases different means must be used for making contact with the families through a series of visits to the homes. The purpose of these contacts is to give the tenants real confidence in the local authority's intentions and an understanding of the possible alternatives that lie before them. Through them the housing manager will get to know his prospective tenants, their varying needs and their varying capacities. He will be able to advise them personally on many things connected with the move and how best to prepare for what may be a critical change in their way of life."[1]

83 The importance of this was stressed in a number of research reports made available to us by voluntary organisations and universities. As one researcher put it:

"During our survey we constantly found people desperate, for all kinds of reasons, to know when and where they were moving. Their only contact with an officer from the housing department who could give them information was a visit by a housing visitor. It became clear that, to the residents of redevelopment areas, housing visitors are of very great importance."

84 And so we come to what the earlier report termed the heart of the matter. 'The value of these contacts depends almost wholly on the members of the housing department who make them'.[2] Particular stress was laid on the selection and training of staff for both house visits and office interviews. We agree, but we state more directly our opinion that the selection and training of housing visitors is often quite inadequate for the task. There is a big job of training required here.

85 Within the scope of our inquiry, we cannot enter into a discussion of the training of housing visitors and housing management staff. However, our impression is that *training facilities and career structure*

---

[1] *Moving from the Slums*, Seventh Report of the Housing Management Sub-Committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee, HMSO, 1956, paragraph 20.

[2] *Op. cit.*, paragraph 21.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

are in urgent need of review. A housing service can be no better than the quality of the staff employed.

86 In our view local authorities must recognise the importance of this work and the problems to which it gives rise. Housing visitors need a continuous flow of information which they can pass on. They need to be in a position to offer accurate and helpful advice. Even the best housing visitor cannot do his job properly if the framework within which he is working is inadequate.

Assessment of applicants

87 Similar considerations apply to the assessment of the needs of applicants who are not in clearance or redevelopment areas. The traditional approach to this is outlined in a publication of the Institute of Housing Managers:

"A visit is usually made by a member of the housing staff to the applicant's home, although the timing of the visit before an offer is made varies among different authorities. The objects of this visit are mainly to check the particulars the applicant has given about his accommodation, to assess the standards and capabilities of the family as tenants, and if an offer is imminent to discuss where accommodation is to be offered."[1]

88 Most (but not all) local authorities pay home visits to applicants. We think these visits constitute an important and potentially very valuable tool. But more emphasis needs to be laid on giving information and advice, rather than assessing housing standards and 'suitability' for different standards of council housing. From an analysis of the replies to our questionnaire it is clear that there is a wide variety of practice. Some local authorities go to great lengths to allocate houses which are 'suitable', grading applicants according to their suitability for houses of different ages and standards. A housing visitor may be required to assess general standards on a scale, e.g. very good/good/fair/poor/bad/unsuitable. Some local authorities only require housing visitors to make 'general remarks on standards' on the record sheet, others have a list of questions to be filled in, covering 'type', or 'standard' of family, state of rooms, e.g. tidiness, cleanliness in bedrooms and living rooms, state of furniture, state of decoration and repair, and personal cleanliness. Many visitors are required to look at the bedding to assess its cleanliness and quantity. Some have to indicate whether standards are likely to improve or whether supervision would be needed.

89 Alternatively, the emphasis may be different, and the essential purpose of the visit is to discuss with the applicant the types and

---

[1] *The Allocation of Tenancies*, Institute of Housing Managers, 1962.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

locations of houses which are likely to be available, the direct costs (rent and rates) and indirect costs (travel to work) involved, and so forth.

90 We have found considerable variation not only in the extent to which local authorities 'grade' their tenants, but also in the reasons why grading is thought to be necessary. On a very limited scale the justification for grading is that some tenants will not take care of a new house: at the extreme they may wreck it. It would not be sound policy to allocate a high standard house to such an 'unsatisfactory tenant'. But such families are very few in number, though they pose problems for the local authority out of all proportion to their numbers. It is a far cry from allocating specially selected houses to unsatisfactory tenants[1] to grading all according to their 'fitness' for particular types of houses. We were struck by the simple fact that the approach of a number of local authorities to this seemed to vary according to the range of house types they had available. A local authority with a small range (e.g. all post-war houses) see no need for careful grading. On the other hand, a local authority with a great range tend to see a necessity for fine grading.

91 Part of the justification for grading is said to be 'good housing management', but in our view this should involve interpreting the needs and wishes of applicants and, as far as practicable, offering a dwelling in accordance with these. The philosophy of an earlier generation is no longer appropriate. The 1938 report on housing management spoke of good management being 'a form of social education (which should) aim at teaching a new and inexperienced community to be "housing minded" '.[2] But, as a later report pointed out, great changes have taken place since 1938 and the management of council housing is now 'an important enterprise'.[3] Emphasis should now be much more on what prospective tenants want rather than what a housing management department thinks they ought to have. In our view the majority of applicants are 'suitable' for a new house and 'grading' is justified for only a very small proportion.

92 This issue is, of course, related to rent policies. Here there is a real dilemma: should the policy be to allocate houses irrespective of ability to pay and to charge a rent within the tenants' means, or should

---

[1] There is a full discussion of the issues in *Unsatisfactory Tenants*, the Sixth Report of the Housing Management Sub-Committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee, HMSO, 1955.

[2] *The Management of Municipal Housing Estates,* Report of the House Management and Housing Associations Sub-Committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee, HMSO, 1938, page 10.

[3] *Councils and their Houses,* The Eighth Report of the Housing Management Sub-Committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee, HMSO, 1959, page 1.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

The purposes of the home visit

100 In our view there are two essential purposes of the home visit. First, it provides an opportunity to discuss with an applicant their current housing situation, their wishes, the alternatives likely to be open to them and the implications of different choices. (We list in Appendix 4 the matters which may need to be discussed). Where the housing visitor feels that the applicant has serious problems which require the assistance of the social work department he should make contact with that department to ensure that such help as is needed is forthcoming. Secondly, the home visit is necessary as a means of checking that the information given by an applicant is accurate, and also to obtain additional information in order to enable the appropriate priority to be given to the application. In short, the home visit provides an opportunity for both the applicant and the local authority to obtain the information they require.

101 It follows that home visits should be by appointment. At present they are often made without warning. We understand that the object of the unannounced visit is to ensure that no special cleaning or tidying up can be carried out which might influence the visitor's report as to the family's housing standard. This practice is, in our view, outmoded. We believe that a visit by appointment would result in securing a better understanding of the problems and wishes of the applicant, particularly if preceded by a letter explaining the purpose of the visit and listing the types of issues to be discussed.

102 It is essential that the home visitor is in a position to give accurate information on the availability of accommodation, on rent levels and rebate schemes and, above all, on the likely date of re-housing. People would rather know the worst than be put off with indefinite or inaccurate information. Where the 'worst' is a long delay, the housing visitor should be in a position to discuss alternatives such as a move to a new town, the opportunities for house purchase, and so forth.

103 We feel it to be essential that families being offered accommodation should have the widest possible choice from the properties which the housing authority expect to have available. As we have already pointed out, much will depend on the preparatory work carried out by the housing visitor who should have had a far ranging discussion with the prospective tenant on the type of housing and the area(s) they would like. This would be compared with the pool of housing which is expected to be available. The family will then know whether they can expect an early offer which meets with their wishes or whether they must either 'lower their sights' or have to wait until something more suitable becomes available.

104 Our attention was drawn to the undesirable delays which arise if accommodation remains vacant whilst offers are made to several

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

families who are unwilling to accept the tenancy. Such long delays are intolerable in areas of housing stress at a time of acute housing shortage. We do not, however, feel that this justifies a rigid policy of a fixed number of offers after which the family is told that no further offers will be made, or alternatively, that six months or one year or an even longer period will elapse before another offer will be considered.

105 We feel that given careful pre-allocation discussion with the prospective tenant, it will be possible to reconcile the need to give wider choice with the demand for speedy re-letting, without the punitive policy of limiting the number of offers. Where a housing authority is faced with re-letting properties which are not very desirable one possibility (already adopted by a number of authorities) is for these to be offered to families with lower priority who can decide whether to wait for a suitable offer or to accept an immediate offer of a less desirable house or flat.

Liaison with health and social work departments

106 We have been critical of the ability of housing departments to deal adequately with the minority of applicants who have exceptional social problems. Indeed, unless there is to be undesirable duplication of social workers (who are in short supply), this type of social assessment is not a function which should be carried out by housing departments. No one would suggest that a housing department should employ its own medical staff to make assessments of 'health cases': this is done by the department with the recognised skills—the health department. Similarly 'social cases' should be dealt with by the relevant social work department. We envisage a larger role for the social work departments than is general at present.

107 There are large variations between local authorities in the priority which is accorded to ill-health in the allocation of council houses. There are similar variations in the procedures adopted and the criteria employed in assessing ill-health. In our view there is a need for a comprehensive definition of physical and mental health in place of the commonly limited criteria of physical disorder or defect.

108 A common procedure is for consideration to be given to the immediate rehousing of the most urgent cases on the special recommendation of the Medical Officer of Health. These are dealt with outside the normal selection arrangements, although special points (or their equivalent) may be given to less urgent cases of ill-health. Alternatively, all 'health cases' are considered outside the normal procedures. In one large authority, for instance, doctors, psychiatric and medical social workers in the area are invited to write direct and confidentially to the Medical Officer of Health about any serious

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

The purposes of the home visit

100 In our view there are two essential purposes of the home visit. First, it provides an opportunity to discuss with an applicant their current housing situation, their wishes, the alternatives likely to be open to them and the implications of different choices. (We list in Appendix 4 the matters which may need to be discussed). Where the housing visitor feels that the applicant has serious problems which require the assistance of the social work department he should make contact with that department to ensure that such help as is needed is forthcoming. Secondly, the home visit is necessary as a means of checking that the information given by an applicant is accurate, and also to obtain additional information in order to enable the appropriate priority to be given to the application. In short, the home visit provides an opportunity for both the applicant and the local authority to obtain the information they require.

101 It follows that home visits should be by appointment. At present they are often made without warning. We understand that the object of the unannounced visit is to ensure that no special cleaning or tidying up can be carried out which might influence the visitor's report as to the family's housing standard. This practice is, in our view, outmoded. We believe that a visit by appointment would result in securing a better understanding of the problems and wishes of the applicant, particularly if preceded by a letter explaining the purpose of the visit and listing the types of issues to be discussed.

102 It is essential that the home visitor is in a position to give accurate information on the availability of accommodation, on rent levels and rebate schemes and, above all, on the likely date of re-housing. People would rather know the worst than be put off with indefinite or inaccurate information. Where the 'worst' is a long delay, the housing visitor should be in a position to discuss alternatives such as a move to a new town, the opportunities for house purchase, and so forth.

103 We feel it to be essential that families being offered accommodation should have the widest possible choice from the properties which the housing authority expect to have available. As we have already pointed out, much will depend on the preparatory work carried out by the housing visitor who should have had a far ranging discussion with the prospective tenant on the type of housing and the area(s) they would like. This would be compared with the pool of housing which is expected to be available. The family will then know whether they can expect an early offer which meets with their wishes or whether they must either 'lower their sights' or have to wait until something more suitable becomes available.

104 Our attention was drawn to the undesirable delays which arise if accommodation remains vacant whilst offers are made to several

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

families who are unwilling to accept the tenancy. Such long delays are intolerable in areas of housing stress at a time of acute housing shortage. We do not, however, feel that this justifies a rigid policy of a fixed number of offers after which the family is told that no further offers will be made, or alternatively, that six months or one year or an even longer period will elapse before another offer will be considered.

105 We feel that given careful pre-allocation discussion with the prospective tenant, it will be possible to reconcile the need to give wider choice with the demand for speedy re-letting, without the punitive policy of limiting the number of offers. Where a housing authority is faced with re-letting properties which are not very desirable one possibility (already adopted by a number of authorities) is for these to be offered to families with lower priority who can decide whether to wait for a suitable offer or to accept an immediate offer of a less desirable house or flat.

Liaison with health and social work departments

106 We have been critical of the ability of housing departments to deal adequately with the minority of applicants who have exceptional social problems. Indeed, unless there is to be undesirable duplication of social workers (who are in short supply), this type of social assessment is not a function which should be carried out by housing departments. No one would suggest that a housing department should employ its own medical staff to make assessments of 'health cases': this is done by the department with the recognised skills—the health department. Similarly 'social cases' should be dealt with by the relevant social work department. We envisage a larger role for the social work departments than is general at present.

107 There are large variations between local authorities in the priority which is accorded to ill-health in the allocation of council houses. There are similar variations in the procedures adopted and the criteria employed in assessing ill-health. In our view there is a need for a comprehensive definition of physical and mental health in place of the commonly limited criteria of physical disorder or defect.

108 A common procedure is for consideration to be given to the immediate rehousing of the most urgent cases on the special recommendation of the Medical Officer of Health. These are dealt with outside the normal selection arrangements, although special points (or their equivalent) may be given to less urgent cases of ill-health. Alternatively, all 'health cases' are considered outside the normal procedures. In one large authority, for instance, doctors, psychiatric and medical social workers in the area are invited to write direct and confidentially to the Medical Officer of Health about any serious

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

cases of ill-health caused or aggravated by bad housing conditions which they think merit priority rehousing. The Medical Officer of Health assesses the urgency of the cases and nominates the most urgent to the Housing Manager for rehousing in a quota of dwellings set aside annually by the Housing Committee for this purpose.

109 It is a common feature of all schemes that the Medical Officer of Health makes the assessment of the extent to which housing circumstances are adversely affecting health. We think this is as it should be. The problem lies in determining the degree to which ill-health should be a factor in the selection process. 'Urgent' cases are obvious enough, but at the other extreme it can be argued that the whole purpose of providing adequate housing is related to health (slum clearance, overcrowding, lack of facilities for personal hygiene, etc.).

110 A quota system provides the Medical Officer of Health with a framework within which he can assess case priorities. But, even if (as is common) the quota can be exceeded if necessary, it establishes a limit to the needs which can be met, irrespective of what these needs are in any particular year. Our own preference, which is supported by a substantial body of evidence, is for 'health cases' to be subject to no arbitrary limit.

111 In one sense, of course, most applicants for council houses could make a case on 'health' grounds. But our concern is with applicants whose individual circumstances are such that they demand priority over the generality of applicants. Such applicants need to be treated outside the normal selection procedures. On the other hand, when the circumstances do not warrant immediate rehousing the application should be dealt with in the normal way with an appropriate 'weighting' for the degree of ill-health.

112 A number of authorities find great value in regular meetings between representatives of the housing, health and other social work departments on health priorities. Taken further, we have the approach recommended by the Seebohm Committee, which we wholeheartedly support:

'In a wider context, there must be joint planning between the housing, planning and social service departments. This is necessary to make sure, as far as possible, that sufficient dwellings of the right kinds are provided and that the needs of which different departments are especially aware are taken into account in the design of dwellings or the layout of new housing estates. It is sufficient for us to state this as an aim and to leave local authorities to work out the details of how it should be implemented: whether, for example, there should be formal co-ordinating bodies at member and chief officer level. However, for as long as "welfare" functions are separated from housing in administrative counties, we think there should be a statutory obligation on county councils and district councils to support each other on the scale and methods of providing housing for groups in special need.'[1]

---

[1] *Report of the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services,* Cmnd. 3703, HMSO, 1968, paragraph 426.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

113 There is considerable disquiet on the matter of certificates from general practitioners. Many of these (we are told) are quite useless and may often be given as a result of pressures from patients. A certification of 'general debility' or 'needs rehousing' is not of any help. However, it would be wrong to conceive the issue in such narrow terms. The general practitioner is an important member of the health team; it is this team which probably knows a family's circumstances best. The general practitioner may have difficulty in assessing a family's priority claim for housing (in some areas a great many of his patients may have a strong claim); but he can bring to the attention of the health visitors and the Medical Officer of Health cases which he thinks deserve priority consideration. Especially is this so where he has the benefit of advice from the health visitor, district nurse or social worker attached to his practice. Good communication between the various members of the health and social work team, and through the Medical Officer of Health to the housing department is far superior to a system of certificates.

The disabled

114 Most families rehoused on grounds of ill-health will probably require normal dwellings, but some conditions and disabilities require specially designed accommodation. Often the special variations in design may be slight, yet costly to achieve in existing dwellings. There is much to be said for some advance (as distinct from totally ad hoc) planning. We were interested to read what Mr. P. J. Dixon, Director of Housing at Newcastle upon Tyne, had to say about this in a paper given to the Royal Society of Health:

'The cost of ensuring that at least a percentage of all ground floor flats or bungalows are built in such a way as to be particularly suitable for physically handicapped persons is minimal. The provision of wide door openings, space for a wheel chair alongside the toilet, low electric light switches, provision for a low level sink, waist high electric outlet sockets, shallow ramps instead of steps, etc., only represents a fractional increase in initial building costs, but the same items cost quite staggering sums of money if they have to be provided at a later date. It does not seem unreasonable to expect the housing authority to meet the cost of this kind of provision, leaving the welfare authority to bear the cost of any additional aids or adaptions necessary to meet the special needs of a particular handicap. There is merit in ensuring that in every new housing development a small number of homes are provided with the kind of feature mentioned, even if no special need is immediately apparent. The homes provided would be quite acceptable to ordinary families but would, in the course of time, be available for reletting, by which time there might well be families with handicapped member wanting such accommodation.'[1]

---

[1] P. J. Dixon, *'The Tenant'*, Paper read before the Health Congress of the Royal Society of Health, 1968.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

115 There is a fear that specially designed dwellings will be 'wasted'. One housing manager stated that in his experience the inclusion of a proportion of such dwellings in building programmes was "practically unsound: special building would either have to be kept empty for a suitable tenant or if occupied (and these dwellings would normally be occupied by aged persons), it would mean uprooting the aged tenants to make way for an invalid tenant". The evidence we have received convinces us that these fears are misplaced. Indeed a proportion of special dwellings actually avoids this problem: it is only when there is a very small number of these dwellings that management problems arise.

116 A number of cases have arisen where disabled people have apparently had difficulty in obtaining—or even been precluded from applying for—council houses on the ground that they were already in adequate accommodation. We do not think that this is general: most local authorities rightly have regard to the adequacy of the accommodation for the particular family or person concerned.

The assessment of need

117 In our view, the assessment of need must take account of two major factors:

(i) what are the present housing conditions of the household?—space (too little or too much); fitness; amenities; design factors; location factors (including nearness to relatives or close friends for old people); cost; security of tenure (especially in relation to tied houses and threat of eviction);

(ii) how well can *this* household cope with living in *these* conditions? This covers the 'medical' and 'social' components of needs for rehousing. For some applicants, a doctor or a trained social worker will have to be involved in this assessment; for many, appropriately trained housing department staff can do it.

118 If priorities were based on such a system a high priority for public rehousing would be for households in bad conditions with which they are unable to cope, and where the potential ability to improve their own situation is low. Households in bad conditions, but able to help themselves can be allocated council housing in turn or helped and advised on how to help themselves if there is likely to be a long wait for council housing due to local shortage. (Advice may be needed, for example, on mortgages and other ways of financing house purchase, on the procedure for finding and vetting houses to buy, on improvement grants and on the ways of obtaining a housing association or society tenancy).

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Selection by officers or members

119 In the larger local authorities the allocation of tenancies is largely undertaken by officers. 'Special cases', however, are often considered by the Committee. In smaller authorities members are much more likely to be closely involved in individual cases and in the selection process. In rural districts separate lists are commonly kept for each parish and the councillor for the parish is expected to have local knowledge on which to base decisions.

120 The Rural District Councils Associations told us that:

"This method has the advantage that councillors and officers have personal knowledge of the individual circumstances of applicants and the flexibility of the method allows the right size and type of house to be selected for each family. In practice local authorities and their officers try to operate merit schemes in a just and equitable way but there is the disadvantage that pressure will sometimes inevitably be brought to bear on those responsible for selecting tenants. This could be reduced by the use of points schemes coupled with the addition of merit considerations."

121 The problems which can arise if members are personally involved in selecting tenants was highlighted in the report on studies undertaken for the Maud Committee on *the Management of Local Government.*

"Two research workers with knowledge of housing administration in a number of areas suggested to us that sometimes when committee members are involved in the selection of individual applicants their decision is influenced by criteria other than housing need. For example, they sometimes reject people with bad reputations; there can, for example, be discrimination againts unmarried mothers. Another research worker said that in the authority he investigated no attempt was made officially to distinguish between good and bad tenants, but that some sorting out was done behind the scenes. In another authority the Clerk said that there were very few problems of rent arrears and suggested that this was because the likelihood of regular payment of rent was taken into account in allocating tenancies.
Where committees are involved in housing allocation it is also possible that individual councillors will be approached by prospective tenants. One research worker told us of an authority where applicants were interviewed by the committee and there the councillors maintained that they were constantly pursued by people wishing to obtain houses. The housing manager in one county borough receives from his committee lists of people wanting to be rehoused. In one rural district it is said to be the usual procedure for people to make a written application and at the same time to go and see a local councillor. In one authority considerable embarrassment was caused when a councillor who had been approached by a prospective tenant passed on information given him by a member of staff of the housing department, but afterwards found to be false, that an offer of a house was about to be made, the councillor himself discovered the error in a conversation with another tenant on the waiting list who had just received a letter offering him the house in question! A research worker who investigated a group of small urban

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

housing authorities noted that a councillor is often the person who tells an applicant that he has been granted a council house!"[1]

122 *In our view the selection of individual tenants for council houses should in general be undertaken by officers within the policy framework established by the Council.* This policy should be clearly set out (e.g. in a points scheme) and published. Members should, of course, keep a watch on the way in which a selection scheme is working and they should be able to raise queries, and ask for a full examination of complaints.

123 It seems to us that this is a proper distribution of functions. Furthermore, it is important that all parties are adequately protected: the member from applicants, the officers from members, and the applicants from possible injustice on the part of either. But this will work only if there is a clearly defined and publicised selection policy. Without this it is difficult to achieve fairness and even more difficult to demonstrate it: particularly in small authorities and in scattered rural areas members will be subject to pressure from applicants, and officers will be subject to pressure from individual members.

Types of selection schemes

124 Previous Housing Management Sub-Committees have not recommended any one type of selection scheme for general use. Indeed, our immediate predecessor maintained that it would not be practicable 'for a uniform method of selection to be adopted by all authorities'.[2] Our Scottish counterpart, however, unhesitatingly recommended that 'allocation schemes based on date of application or merit (including points or group schemes which take these considerations into account) and straightforward points schemes are unsatisfactory and should be replaced by "group-plus-points" schemes'.[3]

125 We have undertaken no comprehensive review of types of selection scheme. Our attention has been focused on general issues and principles. We did, however, examine some thirty selection schemes. We concluded that it was impossible within the scope of

---

[1] *Management of Local Government, Volume 5, Local Government Administration in England and Wales* by Margaret Harrison and Alan Norton. An enquiry carried out for the Committee on the Management of Local Government, HMSO, 1967, pages 372–3.

[2] *Selection of Tenants and Transfers and Exchanges,* Third Report of the Housing Management Sub-Committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee, HMSO, 1949, paragraph 29.

[3] *Allocating Council Houses,* Report of the Sub-Committee of the Scottish Housing Advisory Committee, HMSO, 1967, page 37, paragraph 90(2).

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

our inquiry to evaluate these, though we comment at length in later chapters on major issues arising such as residential qualifications and the exclusion of certain groups of applicant. We were also confirmed in our opinion that, while the principles we outline in this report are generally valid, their detailed application in any particular area must be determined in the light of the local housing situation. Nevertheless, we feel it is incumbent on us to comment on the main types of schemes, though in practice each type can shade imperceptibly into another type.

Date order schemes

126 We were constantly impressed during our inquiry by the enormous differences in the housing situation in different parts of the country. Indeed, some areas are now in the position, or rapidly reaching the position, of having a balance of supply and need or even a possible surplus of council housing. In situations where there is little or no backlog of housing need there appears to be widespread acceptance of the equity of allocating houses in order of date-application.

127 In a paper submitted to us by one local authority the following advantages were among those listed in favour of such a scheme:

"(i) The scheme is very simple and easily understood.

(ii) Applicants appreciate the fairness of the scheme and its simplicity.

(iii) The scheme is easy to administer and reduces clerical time.

(iv) The scheme simplifies investigation of applicants' circumstances.

(v) It is easier to estimate the date when accommodation could be offered. The knowledge of the length of the waiting period may induce some applicants to solve their own housing problems.

(vi) Applicants who improve their circumstances by, for example, obtaining better accommodation after application, are not penalised, provided they still have a housing need.

(vii) Applicants who limit the size of their families have an equal opportunity of housing.

(viii) The time of Committees is saved to some extent. In partiuclar, this dispenses with the need to review points schemes from time to time".

128 Our view is that where there is no real housing problem *and as long as individual hardship cases and key workers are dealt with separately,* a date-order allocation scheme has many merits, appears to be generally acceptable, and may well be appropriate. We would certainly deprecate a scheme under which houses were allocated strictly according to the date order in which applications were lodged without any reference being made to, or account being taken of, the degree of housing and social need. But in areas where there is no backlog of need and where applicants are being housed within, say, eighteen months of registration, a date-order allocation scheme is

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

simple, popular and acceptable as being fair. In all such schemes, however, there should be an assessment of need and applicants suffering hardship should be rehoused outside the scheme. This is the general practice in areas operating date order schemes.

129 A variation on a date-order scheme is one in which applicants are grouped according to their circumstances. If the effect of such a grouping is to give priority to those with greater need we think this is preferable to a general date-order scheme. The type of grouping we have in mind is one in which applicants are grouped, for example, into :

(i) Evictions
(ii) Severe ill-health or 'social need'
(iii) Overcrowding and sharing
(iv) All other applicants

In this example, the first three groups would have priority over the remainder. But if there is a large number of groups and there is insufficient distinction between those with and those without urgent need, the scheme is likely to be inferior to a points scheme. In particular there is no objective basis for determining how many houses are to be allocated to each group.

Points schemes

130 Points schemes, of widely varying degrees of complexity, are widely used. They constitute an attempt to weigh the relative claims of applicants in greatly different circumstances. They are excellent in concept but exceedingly difficult to devise in detail with fairness. They need continual review (in the light of changing conditions) if they are not to become outdated. (For instance, 'war service' still figures in some points schemes).

131 Points schemes are, in concept, quite different from date-order schemes, but in practice can be very similar if either (or both) a large number of points is allocated for length of waiting time or if the range of housing need is narrow.

132 Group-plus-points schemes are similar to the grouped date-order schemes discussed above, and they suffer the same major disadvantage : it is not easy to determine the basis for deciding how many houses are to be allocated to each group.

'Merit' schemes

133 We use this fine-sounding term for schemes which attempt to treat each application 'on its merits'. As a general approach, particularly in larger authorities, this approach would appear to be unworkable—though some quite large authorities apparently do not find it so. One authority, for example, with 5,000 council houses,

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

informed us that "the preparation of the short list for consideration by the Lettings Committee is left to the discretion of the Housing Officer, who prepares his lists from the investigations carried out in each individual case". These schemes also have the fundamental drawbacks that they cannot be published, and that consistency and impartiality is difficult to achieve and virtually impossible to demonstrate.

134 On the other hand, a merit scheme does permit the exercise of judgement on factors which it is difficult to 'point'. It is noteworthy that points schemes characteristically deal with easily measureable, objective factors such as overcrowding, lack of amenities and sharing. These factors are capable of statistical treatment. Health, social and economic factors are much less amenable to this.

Combined schemes

135 Some authorities use a combination of schemes, for example a merit scheme for 'priority' cases (e.g. for severe ill-health, homelessness and eviction); a points scheme for 'ordinary' applicants (families); and a date-order scheme for single people. All authorities deal with cases of 'exceptional hardship' outside their normal scheme, though the definition of 'exceptional' varies. Many authorities deal with their rehousing obligations for clearance and redevelopment separately, though a number award a large number of points thus technically bringing such households within the points scheme.

Conclusion on selection schemes

136 Our own view, as we have already stated, is that no one system is appropriate generally. We stress the importance of social need and its assessment by the appropriate non-housing department. Like cases of severe ill-health, evictions, homelessness and so forth, this should be dealt with as a priority outside the main selection scheme. Merit schemes suffer the fundamental drawbacks that they cannot be published and that consistency and impartiality must always be in doubt. On the other hand, points schemes can measure only objective factors which are capable of 'pointing'.

137 Apart from this, it is difficult to give useful guidance: so much will depend on the character of the local housing situation. We do, however, repeat what we have said earlier: schemes should be published and readily available. They should also be as simple as possible (and certainly comprehensible—which by no means all are), and subject to regular review in the light of changing housing conditions.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Chapter 4
Residential qualifications

Previous reports

138 Few issues give rise to such controversy as the 'residential qualifications' required by local authorities before an applicant can be accepted on the housing list or considered for rehousing. Reports of previous Housing Management Sub-Committees have been unanimous in condemning these on the ground that they conflict with the principle of allocating council houses on the basis of housing need. The latest and lengthiest exposition is to be found in the 1955 report on *Residential Qualifications.*[1] We think a summary of the relevant sections of that report will provide a useful background to our discussion.

The 1955 report

139 First and foremost, the Sub-Committee stressed the difficulties facing families who were unable to gain admission to the housing list of any local authority. Originally resident in one district they had moved to another—perhaps because the head of the family had changed his employment. They had been refused admission to the housing list of their new local authority because they did not satisfy the residential requirements demanded from applicants. Their former local authority had in the meanwhile removed their name from their list because they were no longer resident in the district. For housing purposes they have become 'stateless persons'.

140 Prominent in the ranks of these 'stateless persons' were ex-servicemen whose connections with their home towns had been severed. But attention was also drawn to families who had always lived in the same 'general locality', but who from time to time changed their address as they moved from one set of furnished rooms to another. Particularly in the larger urban areas such moves might involve a crossing of local authority boundaries: in consequence existing residential qualifications were lost and a start had to be

[1] *Residential Qualifications*, Fifth Report of the Housing Management Sub-Committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee, HMSO, 1955.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

made in acquiring new ones. Residential qualifications varied from 'quite short' periods to five years or more. In some areas the qualification was determined by reference to a fixed date: in such cases newcomers could never hope to qualify. The Sub-Committee's view was that until all applications were accepted for investigation and consideration there could be no assurance that houses would in fact be let to those in the greatest need.

141 The Sub-Committee came to the same conclusion as its predecessor,[1] viz. that all restrictions on admission to local authorities' housing lists should be abolished as soon as conditions permitted. In their opinion the time had arrived for their removal in a large number of districts. Exceptions were made for three classes of areas:

(i) the areas of special residential attraction
(ii) the areas short of building land
(iii) the areas having an exceptional amount of employment.

In these areas, where the abolition of residential qualifications might not be practicable, it was urged that—as a first step towards complete abolition—they should be reduced to a uniform level of one year.

The present position

142 No further review of the situation has been undertaken in the fourteen years since the publication of the Fifth Report. During that time the housing situation has considerably eased (though there remain extremely difficult problems in some areas—particularly those which fall into the three classes listed above), and our society has become significantly more mobile. One household in ten moves each year. Administrative boundaries are increasingly irrelevant in terms of labour markets and housing markets. Mounting concern for industrial efficiency, mobility and redeployment has underlined the need to abolish any artificial barriers to movement.

143 In London—the area with the largest and most intractable housing problem—residential qualifications for acceptance on a housing list have been abolished by the London Government Act 1963. (We discuss this further in paragraphs 148–149 below). Nevertheless, many local authorities have still found it necessary to discriminate against newcomers in various ways.

144 In our sample of local authorities 17% had no residential qualification whatsoever—whether for acceptance on the housing list or for consideration for rehousing.[2] 38% allowed unrestricted entry to the

---

[1] *Selection of Tenants and Transfers and Exchanges*, Third Report of the Housing Management Sub-Committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee, HMSO, 1949.

[2] The sample was not uniformly representative of all local authorities. See Appendix 2.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

housing list of any applicant already living in the area and non-residents working in their area. A further 28% accepted registrations from residents but not from people working in the area. There were only 17% of authorities who required a specific period of residence (or employment) in the area before acceptance on the housing list. Residential qualifications for acceptance on the housing list varied from less than a year to more than four years.

Table 6

Residence Qualifications for Acceptance on the Housing List

Access to Housing List		% of Total
Unrestricted access to the housing list for both residents and non-residents		17
Unrestricted access to the housing list for both residents and employees in the area		38
Unrestricted access to the housing list for residents but not employees in the area		28
Specific period of residence (or employment) required:		
Less than 1 year	2	17
1 year but less than 2 years	6	
2 years but less than 3 years	4	
3 years but less than 4 years	4	
4 years or more	1	

Table 7

Residential Qualifications for Rehousing

	% of Total
Residence required for acceptance on list	17
Specific period of residence required before rehousing can be considered	58

Period of Residence Required	% of those requiring period of residence
Less than 1 year	13
1 year but less than 2 years	21
2 years but less than 3 years	21
3 years but less than 4 years	12
4 years but less than 5 years	3
5 years but less than 6 years	28
6 years or more	2

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

145 Much more widespread than a residential qualification for acceptance on a list is that for consideration for rehousing. In all, three-quarters of the local authorities in our sample had such a qualification, ranging up to six years or more, though figures of this nature can mask significant differences between the ways in which residential rules are applied.

146 It is quite common for local authorities to give points for length of residence. Sometimes these are used as 'balancing' points to decide between applicants of equal need, but sometimes they are used as an integral part of a points scheme, in which case it is usual for a maximum to be applied to the number of points which can be accumulated.

147 Points awarded for length of time on the list are an attempt to measure the length of time the applicant has been in housing need. A few authorities attempt a more sophisticated measurement by giving points for the length of time the applicant has lived in the conditions which are causing hardship. Points for length of time on the list are either awarded at a fixed number for the year the application was registered or may be added annually. The system of fixed points was adopted, particularly by larger authorities, to reduce the administrative problems of adding on more points at intervals.

The London situation

148 As we have indicated, the position in London is controlled by the London Government Act 1963. Under Section 22, each London Borough is required to register an application for housing accommodation from anyone resident in the Borough. The Borough Council's application form must include information required by the Greater London Council to enable them to record the housing needs of Greater London. Each London Borough is required to keep a register of housing applications and to provide information, when requested, to the Greater London Council. Applications from persons not living in the Greater London area can be made to the Greater London Council who may send them to the appropriate Borough Councils who must add the application to their register.

149 None of these statutory requirements limits the freedom of individual local authorities in London to determine what priority should be given to any application. The objective is to ensure that a central record is maintained which provides as clear a picture as possible of the demand for council housing in Greater London. Following the reorganisation of London government the majority of London Boroughs accepted:

(a) a common form of application for housing accommodation,

(b) a common residential qualification,

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

(c) a basic points scheme, and
(d) agreement to transfer the applications of those families who moved from one borough to another, without loss of benefit for time already spent on the housing list.

The main point at issue arose from the attempt to agree on a common residential qualification for consideration for rehousing. We were told by the Standing Working Party on London Housing that the ultimate solution which obtained very substantial support was 'that to qualify for full consideration on the housing list of a borough council, an applicant shall have lived in Greater London for a continuous period of at least 5 years, and shall have lived in the borough for the last year of that period'. According to the Standing Working Party, the position in 1968 was as follows:

26 Boroughs accepted the common residential qualification.
4 required 5 years in Greater London plus 2 years residence in the Borough.
1 required 3 years in the Borough.
1 required 5 years residence in the Borough during the last 15 years, and
1 required 5 years residence in the Borough prior to rehousing.

Public opinion

150 The general principle which has been enunciated in all previous reports is that allocations should be based on housing need, and that in assessing this the length of residence is irrelevant. In discussing this principle we think that insufficient attention is frequently given to the politics of the matter. Though there may be general professional agreement that housing need should be the prior consideration it is generally held that local opinion (and not only that part of local opinion which is on the housing list) would qualify this by upholding the greater claim of 'local' people.

151 In this connection we were struck by the findings of a survey made available to us by the Opinion Research Centre which suggests that political objections to the abolition of residential qualifications may be less than is generally thought. In answer to the question "who do you think should have priority?" 60% said "people living in bad houses and flats" while 32% said "people who have been on the waiting list several years". Opinion was more evenly divided on the question "Do you think that people getting council houses should have been living or working in a district for some time before being considered or do you think they should get a house based on their needs, irrespective of residential or working qualifications?". On this, 52% said "based on their needs". When a number of factors were listed in order of importance, long residence and time on the waiting list came very low down.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Table 8

Attitudes to Priority for Rehousing

	All Respondents	Privately Renting Tenants	Respondents Aged 21–34
Sample Base	2,079	460	544
	%	%	%
Who do you think should have priority?			
People living in bad houses or flats	60	61	65
People who have been on the waiting list for several years	32	30	28
Don't know	8	8	6
Which TWO of the following do you think should receive most points?			
Living in conditions dangerous to health	59	55	62
Living in slum conditions	40	43	45
Overcrowding	27	27	30
Been on waiting list more than five years	16	13	14
Living with in-laws	14	12	9
Long residence in area	12	13	8
Ill -health	9	10	9
Other	24	25	23
Should people getting council houses have been living or working in district some time before being considered, or should they get a house based on their needs, irrespective of residential or working qualifications?			
Living in district some time	44	40	38
Based on their needs	52	55	60
Don't know	4	5	3

Source: *Housing Problems, Priorities and Preferences*, Opinion Research Centre 1968.

152 We do not want to suggest that policies ought to be determined by public opinion polls. Local authorities have a leadership role to fulfil and this may sometimes involve taking unpopular decisions. However, the conclusion we draw from these survey findings is that though there is no consensus of opinion on residential qualifications, a considerable proportion of the population regard them as being irrelevant.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

The relevant legislation

153 A few local authorities defend residential qualifications on an interpretation of Section 91 of the Housing Act 1957: this requires them 'to consider housing conditions in their district and the needs of the district with respect to the provision of further housing accommodation'. In our view it is a very narrow and restrictive interpretation which holds that this section implies the giving of preference to local residents. The housing needs of an area may be very largely those of existing residents, but they may equally well be those of households moving to, or wishing to move to, the area. *We have already recommended that Section 91 of the Housing Act 1957, should be amended (chapter 1, paragraph 31). The amendment should make it clear that the duty of local housing authorities to review their housing situation should not be restricted to the conditions of the existing population but should encompass the needs and demands arising from inward migration.*

Areas of severe housing pressure

154 Like previous Sub-Committees we think there are areas of severe housing pressure where force of circumstances virtually compels a local authority to discriminate against newcomers. This applies particularly in inner London. As the Standing Working Party on London Housing stated to us in evidence:

'The special circumstances in London and the continuing grave housing shortage particularly in the inner London area make it imperative that there should be some form of residential qualification. The Association of London Borough Housing Managers is looking at the problem of residential qualification, but where so many families have lived for years in overcrowded and insanitary conditions, it is not an easy decision to allow newcomers to the area, (who on arrival have to accept perhaps even worse conditions) to be given priority for the little accommodation which the local authority can make available for families on the Waiting List. For this reason, it is not felt at the present time the London Boroughs will reduce the common residential qualification.'

We are reluctantly forced to accept that in areas of extreme housing pressure some residential qualifications (*for rehousing as distinct from acceptance on the list*) may be unavoidable.

The case for residential qualifications

155 However, it was put to us that on detailed examination the issue is less important than it seems at first sight. In the first place, even where local authorities operate stringent residential rules, exceptions can be made for urgent cases of hardship and for key workers. Secondly, it was argued that a residential qualification

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

does not of itself penalise a newcomer if the qualification is no longer than the time spent on the housing list by families being rehoused. Thirdly, in some areas with housing problems of extreme severity, the majority of families being housed by local authorities are from areas being cleared for redevelopment. (For example, during the years 1965–67, over 80% of the lettings in Islington and Southwark were made to families displaced by clearance or redevelopment). We think it is worth discussing these three points.

156 We are not clear from our evidence how far those local authorities who operate lengthy residential rules make exceptions for cases of hardship. Some local authorities appear to be liberal, others very exacting. Our own view on this is that a liberal policy would go some way to mitigating the undesirable effects of a residential rule. We have in mind particularly the plight of families who are unable to cope without assistance and who were described by the Seebohm Committee as 'vulnerable'. However, if a residential rule operates to exclude applicants from consideration the hardship 'escape' cannot operate. This underlines the need for the abolition of those residential qualifications which have this effect.

157 Several authorities defended residential qualifications on the ground that this involved no hardship since the waiting period for rehousing was in fact longer than the qualifying period. This argument can be reversed: if it is true then there is no reason for having a residential qualification! More seriously, we think that the argument is fallacious. It can have no relevance in areas where points cannot be accumulated until after the residential qualification is met. But even in areas where points are given from the date of registration a comparison of waiting time and qualifying period is a false one, since the former is an average while the latter is not. Thus though an 'average' applicant may not be penalised, the applicant with an acute need may well be. If recent movers to an area are to be penalised at all, we would prefer it to be done via a points scheme rather than by an arbitrary time qualification. In this way cases of acute housing need can be brought forward for consideration. We discuss this further below.

158 The third point underlines the severity of the London position. In inner London only a small proportion of applicants are rehoused from the waiting list. This points to the crucial importance of schemes which assist families to move out of the pressure areas—through Greater London Council nominations, the industrial selection scheme or a housing advisory service.

Points for residence and waiting

159 In concept, points for 'residence' should be distinguished from points for 'waiting', and even more from points for 'length of time in

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

housing need'. In practice, the distinctions are not always easy to make. Nevertheless, we think it will be useful if we discuss each of the three separately.

160 Points for 'residence' have no connection with housing need. They are awarded simply and unequivocally to give some degree of preference to local people. In a number of schemes which we examined most fixed a maximum. A few, however, purposely did not: here the argument was that there comes a time when length of residence has a prior claim over housing need. Points for 'waiting time' are defended on the 'queue' principle, but again have no relationship to housing need.

Points for time in housing need

161 Points for 'length of time in housing need' are quite a different matter. These are given in a valiant and laudable attempt to weigh the competing claims of those who have been in 'need' for a long time against those who have had a more acute need for a shorter time. In principle we think that they can help in achieving fairness in this difficult field.

162 A number of authorities use points for one of the three factors as 'balancing points' to select between applicants of equal housing need. This appears to be a practice which meets with general approval. We agree: it is rough justice in situations where other means of balancing are not possible.

163 It should be clear from what we have said so far that we see the case for giving weight to the length of time during which an applicant has been in housing need. For example, some sort of balance must be drawn between a family who have lived a frictional and uncomfortable life sharing a parents' home for many years and another who have experienced a greater housing need for a comparatively short period of time. But we believe that at the moment there is rather too much emphasis on waiting points and we would like to see some reduction in their significance so that one can better ensure that local authority housing is being allocated to those who are in the greatest housing need.

164 One suggestion was put forward to us which we thought was worthy of further consideration. This was that the points awarded for each year of waiting time should be a fixed percentage of those awarded for housing need. In this way, it was argued, it might be possible to achieve an equitable balance between the two. We were much attracted by this proposal but found it unworkable. It is extremely difficult to produce a reasonably simple scheme which reduces administrative work to a minimum and yet permits local authorities to differentiate between the varying degrees of housing need expressed, not only in hardship or inconvenience at a particular

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

stage in time, but allowing also for the length of time this hardship or inconvenience has been endured. It is unfortunately only too true that the more sophisticated a points scheme becomes, the more costly it is to administer and the less comprehensible it appears to the man in the street. More equitable it may be, yet to the family waiting for housing it is incomprehensible. What the applicant cannot understand, he mistrusts.

165 All this applies to 'normal' schemes. The proposed percentage scheme would be much more complex. It would be necessary each year to review each application on the register—to visit to see whether the home circumstances have changed and then to calculate the percentage waiting points for the next 12 months. This would be impossible for those authorities with long waiting lists—the very authorities who most need to employ a comprehensive points scheme! (In one London borough, for example, there is a housing list of over 11,000 applicants and 2,600 new applications are received each year yet because of the over-riding priority given to families requiring rehousing from clearance and redevelopment areas, only 300 applicants are housed from the housing list each year).

166 Furthermore, if it is accepted that points for waiting time should never be allowed to offset "housing need" points unduly, then the points awarded for waiting time must be restricted to, say, 40% of the total possible under 'housing need'. Because applicants may wait many years in areas of housing stress, an allowance must be made for, say 10 years to reach the maximum. It would thus be necessary to calculate, for each applicant, 4% of points under housing need each year. This would be administratively cumbersome. With regret we were forced to the conclusion that the idea presents so many problems as to be unacceptable to the very housing authorities who would find it most relevant.

Differing local housing situations

167 In this discussion our minds have been focused on the areas of acute housing difficulty, but we were constantly impressed during our inquiry by the enormous differences in the housing situation in different parts on the country. Indeed, some areas are now in the position, or rapidly reaching the position, of having a balance of supply and need or even a possible surplus of council housing. In situations where there is little or no backlog of housing need there appears to be widespread acceptance of the equity of allocating houses in order of date-application.

168 We have already discussed this in the previous chapter. Our view is that where there is no real housing problem and as long as individual hardship cases and key workers are dealt with separately,

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

a date-order allocation scheme has many merits, appears to be generally acceptable, and may well be appropriate.

Our conclusions

169 Conditions differ so greatly between different areas that absolute uniformity is not possible. Nevertheless, we are firmly of the conviction that there should be no barrier to acceptance on a housing list. We regard this of importance both in relation to the rights of applicants and the need of local authorities to have as full information as possible on the demand for council housing in their area. *We therefore recommend that there should be no residential qualification for admission to a housing list. Indeed, we go further and hold it to be fundamental that no one should be precluded from applying for, or being considered for, a council tenancy on any ground whatsoever.* Only if all applications are admitted is it possible to assess needs. Adequate records are essential as a guide to the formulation of policy. As we point out in Chapter One, local authorities need to have better information on the housing situation in their areas: the articulate demand for council housing is not sufficient of itself, but it is an important element which should not be artificially circumscribed. *We think that this rule should be made a statutory obligation.*

170 *Our other recommendations are as follows:*

(*i*) *Specific periods of residence before rehousing are undesirable in principle and are justifiable only in the few areas with extreme housing pressures.*

(*ii*) *Where a specific period of residence before rehousing is unavoidable, it should be reviewed regularly, with a view to progressive reduction.*

(*iii*) *Even where there is (unavoidably) such a residence qualification, local authorities should consider cases of special hardship.*

(*iv*) *Points for length of residence (as distinct from length of housing need) are undesirable except for purposes of differentiating between cases of equal housing need.*

(*v*) *Points for length of time in housing need constitute a reasonable method of attempting to measure hardship and priority for rehousing.*

(*vi*) *Selection of tenants in date order of application may be reasonable in areas with little housing need, but even here there should be machinery for the review of real cases of hardship. We cannot accept the justification for a date-order system in areas of housing pressure.*

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

(*vii*) *Key workers, i.e. essential incoming workers,*[1] *should be considered outside the normal selection scheme.*

We have also recommended (in paragraph 153) that the amendment of Section 91 of the Housing Act 1957 (which we proposed in Chapter 1) should make it clear that the duty of local authorities to review their housing situation should not be restricted to the conditions of the existing population, but should encompass the needs and demands arising from inward migration.

[1] In their evidence the Department of Employment and Productivity suggested that broadly a worker might be described as 'essential' if his particular skill or aptitude was essential to the undertaking in which he was engaged and there was no suitably qualified or experienced labour locally to fill the position, and would be regarded as 'incoming' if his permanent home was beyond reasonable daily travelling distance.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Chapter 5
Exchanges and transfers

Previous reports and circulars

171 The subject of exchanges and transfers has been thoroughly discussed in previous reports of the Housing Management Sub-Committee. There is also an abundance of Ministry circulars on the matter. The 1938 report, under the heading "after-care of tenants", raised the issue within a context which has become increasingly familiar, namely 'underoccupation':

"Some check is necessary to prevent a family from continuing to occupy a house which with the passing of time has become too large after the children have grown up and left home, and to stop the taking of lodgers. In the former event the house is not being used to the best advantage; in the latter privilege is being abused; in both events the interests of the taxpayer and ratepayer are prejudiced."[1]

Ministry of Health Circular 1740, which brought the report to the notice of local authorities, stressed the importance of ensuring that the best use was made of the houses provided.

172 The second report, published in 1945, again referred mainly to underoccupation, advised the transfer to smaller accommodation of families consisting of one or two persons, and suggested the possibility of exchanges with private landlords.[2] The third report, published in 1949, recommended local authorities to encourage and initiate transfers and exchanges which would enable fuller use to be made of housing accommodation, to make it known that they would sympathetically consider applications to this end, and (in order that the 'full possibilities of transfers' could be assessed) to ensure the availability of accurate and up-to-date information about the size and composition of families living in their houses. They also recommended local authorities to consider assisting tenants with the cost of

---

[1] *The Management of Municipal Housing Estates,* Report of the House Management and Housing Associations Sub-Committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee, HMSO, 1938, paragraph 35.

[2] *Housing Management, Management of Municipal Housing Estates,* Second report of the Housing Management Sub-Committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee, HMSO, 1945, pages 10–11.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

removal where this proved to be an obstacle to a move which would enable a better use of accommodation; to do all they could to secure the co-operation of private landlords in arranging exchanges; and in the large conurbations to consider rogether methods of improving the interchange of information about tenants who wish to move between their districts.[1]

173 Ministry of Health Circular 31/49, which commended this report to housing authorities, expressed the Minister's view that "transfers and exchanges can go far towards satisfying the housing needs of existing tenants without prejudice to other applicants", and his hopes that "local authorities will do all they can in this respect". A series of subsequent circulars has kept the subject before local authorities. Ministry of Local Government and Planning Circular 38/51 drew attention to the advantages of increasing the proportion of houses with one or two bedrooms, in order to enable old people to move to these from larger houses. Ministry of Housing and Local Government Circular 8/52 asked local authorities to facilitate exchanges of tenancies between persons moving from one area to another on change of employment. Ministry of Housing and Local Government Circular 24/52 advised that the needs of both small and large families might be met by arrangements for the exchange of tenancies or for the transfer to smaller houses of families now occupying houses larger than they required. This circular also asked local authorities to permit their tenants to take in lodgers where this would bring spare accommodation into use.

174 The fourth report, published in 1953, was couched in similar terms to those of earlier reports. Some caution was expressed against 'the fallacious assumption that housing problems can be reduced to a matter of impersonal arithmetic'. Nevertheless, the Sub-Committee were impressed by the available statistics which showed that, in 1951, there were $2\frac{1}{2}$ million households occupying more than two rooms per person. (Of these, nearly $\frac{2}{3}$ million were one-person households occupying more than three rooms each). Indeed, they went on to say that 'in these days of acute housing shortage there is clearly a moral obligation on a tenant, who is seriously underoccupying a subsidised council house that is needed urgently for a larger family, to vacate it if the council can make him a reasonable offer of a house of the right size in the same district'. Alternatively a withdrawal of subsidy was suggested.[2]

175 This—the last report to deal with the subject—discussed some

---

[1] *Selection of Tenants and Transfers and Exchanges,* Third report of the Housing Management Sub-Committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee, HMSO, 1949, pages 16–19.

[2] *Transfers, Exchanges and Rents,* Fourth Report of the Housing Management Sub-Committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee, HMSO, 1953.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

of the administrative problems involved in effecting and facilitating transfers and exchanges. We refer to these, in so far as we consider them still relevant, in later paragraphs.

176 As this summary shows, transfers and exchanges have previously been considered largely in the context of ensuring a 'proper' and full use of accommodation provided by local authorities. If this has been the objective it has been a dismal failure: 'underoccupation' (however defined) in council housing is now greater than it has ever been and is increasing rapidly. We do not, however, think that the context of earlier reports is any longer relevant. We think that the objective of policy should be to provide the space standards to which tenants aspire, that the maximum freedom of choice should be provided and that mobility should be facilitated.

The objectives of policy in relation to exchanges and transfers

177 Policy objectives must change with the times. The 1938 Housing Management Report reflected the times by devoting a great deal of attention to the problem of ensuring that tenants with very low incomes could make reasonable use of a council house. Relevant issues were the steps to be taken to prevent infestation by the bed-bug; the need for 'after care' of tenants; and the training necessary for housing management staff to enable them to provide the necessary 'social education'. A generation later, the 1959 report, laid stress on the fact that local authority tenants were now much more representative of the community as a whole, and were 'for the most part, independent, reliable citizens who no longer require the support and guidance which was often thought to be necessary in the past'.[1] Furthermore, they emphasised that 'local authority houses and flats represent a considerable part of the nation's wealth, and that it is the responsibility of local authorities to treat their management as an important business enterprise'[2] *Now, ten years later, we are laying emphasis on the priority which should be attached to the wishes and aspirations of tenants and prospective tenants.* We have pointed to the need for a wider role to be played by housing authorities in assessing needs for all types and tenures of housing, and in giving assistance where necessary to enable people to obtain the type of housing they want. At the same time increasing importance is attached to mobility and the removal of obstacles to mobility. In this new context we see the objective of policy to be the provision of the maximum opportunity for movement.

---

[1] *Councils and Their Houses, Management of Estates,* Eighth Report of the Housing Management Sub-Committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee, HMSO, 1959, paragraph 7.

[2] *Op. cit.,* paragraph 4.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

178 We also think that there is a need for far more information on the movement, and the desire for movement, by council tenants. This is required as an essential tool of management in relation to both existing dwellings and new building.

Definition of exchanges and transfers

179 Local authorities usually draw a distinction between an exchange and a transfer. The former involves only dwellings which are already tenanted, whereas the latter involves a vacant dwelling. The distinction is of considerable importance in housing management. As the Institute of Housing Managers wrote:

'We classify a *transfer* as a case where a council tenant is moved to a vacant dwelling, thus involving the possibility of a drain on resources available for other housing work, and an *exchange* as a case where two or more council tenants mutually agree to exchange dwellings. The latter type involves no use of a dwelling which would otherwise become available for letting, though it may be that the housing department will introduce such a letting in order to improve or accelerate the arrangement.

Transfers do therefore have some impact on other housing work. They may be "council's interest" transfers where the tenant is occupying a house too large for his needs and which would be very valuable for rehousing purposes. Or they may be "tenant's interest" cases, where the tenant is, for example, overcrowded. The first type of case will be dealt with speedily for obvious reasons. The second type involves balancing the tenant's needs, and the needs of good management, against the competing claims of slum clearance and other priority cases. Housing schemes should provide for balancing these competing claims on a reasonable basis.

Exchanges are a most valuable way of helping tenants to obtain greater housing satisfaction without any disadvantage to other housing work. Indeed by interpolating an extra case the housing manager can often use the exchange to help an applicant or another tenant as well as those who originally applied.'

180 The evidence from the Greater London Council was particularly illuminating and is worth quoting *in extenso:*

'Transfers and exchanges are a most valuable and important part of any housing authority's work. Exchanges enable families to find accommodation better suited to their needs without imposing any drain upon the pool of vacant accommodation required for urgent operations such as slum clearance and the relief of overcrowding. It is the Council's practice to agree to any such exchange provided that the family going into each of the two or more lettings involved is suited to the accommodation as regards size and so on. However, as with most housing authorities, the local officer will usually try to find a solution by introducing a third or fourth party in order to make the exchange a viable proposition and an acceptable one to all the parties concerned. The Council agrees freely to exchanges of tenancies with other authorities in Greater London and anywhere in the United Kingdom and it operates an exchange bureau to make it easier for tenants to find

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

someone with whom they can exchange. These arrangements also cover exchanges involving private tenants.

Transfers do have some impact on other housing work because they absorb a vacant dwelling which might have been used for other housing purposes. However, some transfer cases demand early action on their own merits, e.g. cases of overcrowding or the rehousing of elderly people at present living on high floors in a block without lifts. This can sometimes create difficulties in particular parts of the Council's area. For example, a few years ago there was a very heavy burden indeed of rehousing for slum clearance and road improvement work in the inner parts of north and west London and in the last year of the London County Council's responsibilities, transfer cases were virtually ruled out if the applicant required a vacancy in either of these two districts. As this situation looked like continuing, it became necessary to ensure that transfer cases should receive at least a minimum share of the available vacant accommodation and it was laid down that they should have the first call on 15 per cent of all new dwellings and attractive relets regardless of the rehousing and other priority burdens in the locality. This meant some slowing down in rehousing but it was fair to the interests of urgent transfer cases.

On the other hand, transfers can often make a valuable contribution to other housing work and much time is spent in arranging transfers which will release accommodation much sought after for slum clearance and other rehousing work. An example of this is the Council's programme for the provision of seaside homes for elderly municipal tenants from London. These seaside flats and bungalows are allocated exclusively to tenants of the Council or the London borough councils and their rehousing will release a large dwelling with several bedrooms which can be used for a London family from one of the priority groups.'

181 We agree with previous reports of the Housing Management Sub-Committee than an active policy of facilitating and encouraging transfers and exchanges is desirable. We do not think it necessary for us to go over ground covered in previous reports. Rather, we focus our attention on a number of issues which are of particular importance today.

Exchange bureaux

182 Previous reports have discussed the usefulness of exchange bureaux. They have concluded (i) that a *national* bureau, acting as a clearing house for exchanges throughout the whole country is impracticable; (ii) that the value of *regional* bureaux outside London is doubtful; and (iii) that local bureaux are useful.

183 A proposal for a national bureau has recently been outlined in *What?*, the journal of the National Suggestions Centre. This envisages a computer register of 200,000 would-be movers. In answer to a question in the House of Commons, a Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government stated that the use of a computer to facilitate exchanges between council

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

tenants was technically feasible 'but it would involve heavy expenditure which is not possible in present circumstances'.[1]

184 In the time available to us to complete our report, we have not been able to examine this proposal in any depth. It does appear, however, to attract considerable scepticism from local authorities. Nevertheless we think that the proposal merits detailed consideration. Considerably more support was evident for regional (or sub-regional) bureaux. Here the model and experience of the London Mutual Exchange Bureau is of particular help. A summary of a Greater London Council memorandum on this is given in Appendix 6.

The London Government Act

185 The London Government Act 1963 (Section 22(5)) requires the Greater London Council to "establish and maintain facilities for the exchange of housing accommodation in Greater London for other housing accommodation, whether in or outside Greater London, between persons requiring such an exchange and, notwithstanding anything in the Accommodation Agencies Act 1953, may require the payment of a charge by any person making use of those facilities". No similar provisions apply elsewhere, though we think that they should be considered for any legislation following the Report of the Royal Commission on Local Government in England.

186 The Greater London Council is in process of designing a scheme which meets the requirements of the London Government Act. (The present scheme is basically that operated by the London County Council). It will be noted that the provisions do not relate solely to council tenants, nor indeed solely to tenants (as opposed to owner-occupiers). However, the Greater London Council feel that it may be wise to build on the requirements of council tenants. Owner-occupiers are already extensively served by existing agencies. Exchanges involving tenants of private landlords are hampered by the differing rent systems in the private and public sectors. This will not preclude the new Greater London Council scheme from catering for the private tenant, but it is felt that the scheme cannot, in present circumstances, be designed to assist him on a significant scale. To enter into a discussion of how this situation might be changed would take us well beyond our terms of reference.

187 Apart from the three-tier network of bureaux serving the 240,000 tenants of the Greater London Council, most London Borough Councils operate independent bureaux for their own (300,000) tenants. The Boroughs use various exchange systems, but the

---

[1] *House of Commons Official Report, Parliamentary Debates (Hansard), Volume 774, No. 23, Friday, 29th November, 1968*, HMSO, Col. 208.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

majority are of the manually kept, visually operated index card type favoured by the Greater London Council. The Greater London Council are considering the reduction of this complex to a central bureau at County Hall, and a single bureau in each Borough (perhaps with estate or district bureaux where this is warranted by the size and location of an estate). The Borough bureau would cater for all tenants wishing to move to other accommodation within the borough (whether Greater London Council, London Borough Council or private tenant) and the County Hall bureau would cater for tenants seeking an exchange beyond the Borough whether in the rest of London or further out still. These bureaux would be of the index card type, would be supervised-in-use by Borough Council staff but updated periodically by Greater London Council staff. The exact system for notifying to the bureaux details of exchanges has yet to be worked out. The discussions with Boroughs of proposals on these lines have brought a favourable response.

188 Current thinking in the Greater London Council is that no charge should be made for these facilities which are only a streamlined edition of the existing ones. But these might usefully be supplemented by a service for which a payment would be made. For a fee, tenants could be invited to complete a much more detailed specification of their requirements with alternatives, and these would be matched by computer both bilaterally and multilaterally to propose exchanges. This done, the follow-up contacts between the parties would be initiated by the Greater London Council and if, to facilitate these, it was necessary occasionally to inject into the arrangement a void in the Council's or Borough Council's possession, it might do this, provided (a most important proviso) that the resultant void remaining with the Council concerned was not to its disadvantage. There are many complications about using voids, e.g. the high proportion used for statutory rehousing purposes, the responsibilities for redecoration etc. but if these could be overcome, voids could act as a catalyst both here and under the system described in paragraph 187. The fee would have be commensurate with the service and might be £1 per applicant. Alternatively it could be a much higher figure payable only when successful exchanges had been effected.

189 We have quoted at length from London experience and thinking since we think that much of this is applicable in other parts of the country. Our impression is that a number of local authorities, even though recognising the advantages of exchange bureaux, are over-persuaded by the anticipated difficulties. There may also be reluctance to incur further staffing and financial liabilities. We urge a reconsideration of the issue particularly in the conurbations and larger urban areas.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Is underoccupation a 'problem'?

190 We have shown, in Chapter 1, that occupancy rates have fallen markedly over the last fifty years. This has been the result of a major decline in household size which has not been accompanied by an increase in the proportion of small dwellings. There are now far more rooms than persons in the country. (In England and Wales as a whole there were, in 1966, around 80 million rooms in occupied dwellings, but only 46 million persons in private households). If rooms and persons could be exchanged at will there would be no quantitative housing shortage. This, however, is sheer statistical juggling which ignores the fact that people form households and rooms form dwellings. The simple fact is that (on an arbitrary standard) the size-distribution of households does not 'match' the size-distribution of dwellings.

191 Nevertheless, there is great concern with the 'problem' of underoccupation and much effort on the part of local authorities is directed towards 'solving' it. The only 'solution' lies in the long-term provision of a higher proportion of small dwellings. As we demonstrate below this raises its own problems.

192 Two points must be made immediately. First, as our historical sketch in Chapter 1 showed, minimum standards (in operational if not in legislative terms) have increased markedly in recent decades: a corollary of this must be that the norm (and hence standards of occupancy above the norm) have also risen. The Parker Morris Report is eloquent testimony to this. Secondly, criticisms of local authorities "permitting their subsidised tenants to waste space" are misplaced as well as misconceived: except for the small and a typical private furnished sector, council houses are more fully occupied than any others. Thus, while 22.5% of council households have more than two rooms per person, the proportion among owner-occupiers and tenants of private unfurnished accommodation is 41.9% and 41.8% respectively.

193 Much more useful than statistical exercises is the experience of local authorities who have tried, by exchanges and transfers, to reduce underoccupation. We discuss at length in the following paragraphs the experience of the Greater London Council who submitted to us a most useful document on the subject.

The Greater London Council occupancy survey

194 In 1967 the Greater London Council undertook a survey of tenants' incomes and with this was linked an occupancy survey. The purpose of the latter was to ascertain the current position and to record the changes which had occurred in the pattern of occupancy

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

during the seven years since 1960 when a complete occupancy survey of London County Council dwellings had been undertaken. This survey is of particular interest in the present context since it does not suffer from the deficiencies of census-type data. It demonstrates very clearly the actual extent of underoccupancy on a sensitive standard and the problems which arise in attempting to reduce it. The definition of underoccupation employed was two or more rooms in excess of the grading rules normally applied to the allocation of the Council's dwellings. Briefly summarised these are as follows:

Grading Scheme used to determine Greater London Council Dwelling Allocations

Bed sitting room	1 person
1 Bedroom	(i) A married couple without children, or expecting first child. (ii) A married couple with 1 child under 1 year. (iii) Two people same sex.
2 Bedrooms	(i) A married couple with 1 child over 1 year. (ii) A married couple with 2 children, same sex. (iii) A married couple with 2 children of opposite sex, one of whom is under 3 years. (iv) A married couple with 2 children of opposite sexes under 6 years. (v) Any two males and two females, not including a married couple (e.g. widow, daughter and 2 sons).
3 Bedrooms	(i) A married couple with two children of opposite sex, over 6 and over 3 years respectively. (ii) A married couple with 3 children or 4 children if two of each sex.

The same method of grading is adopted for larger families and lettings. In assuming that two people of the same sex can occupy the same bedroom, an exception is made where there is a difference in ages of 30 years or more.

Table 9

Underoccupation in Greater London Council Dwellings 1960 and 1967

Tenants with the following number of rooms in excess of the normal grading scheme	1960		1967	
	No.	%	No.	%
One	44,120	23·8	66,106	29·6
Two	14,261	7·7	25,344	11·3
Three	2,662	1·4	6,037	2·7
Over Three	238	0·1	480	0·2
One or more 'excess' rooms	61,281	33·0	97,967	43·8
Two or more 'excess' rooms	17,161	9·2	31,861	14·2

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

195 If underoccupation were defined in terms of *any* number of rooms in excess of the normal grading scheme, its extent increased from 61,281 dwellings in 1960 to 97,967 dwellings in 1967, i.e. from 33.3% to 43.8%. This, however, is considered by the Greater London Council as being too severe an approach. Underoccupation is regarded as significant only where a household has two or more rooms in excess of their needs as determined by the grading scheme. Indeed, in arranging a move of a tenant to a smaller dwelling (either on displacement or as a voluntary transfer) the Council's allocation policy authorises the Director of Housing to allow one spare room. Furthermore, as the report on the survey points out, this 'is also consistent with the Parker Morris Report which looks to a future of generally more spacious living standards than obtained in the past and makes recommendations accordingly in relation to dwelling design'.

196 On this approach, underoccupation increased from 17,161 dwellings in 1962 (9.2%) to 31,861 dwellings in 1967 (14.2%). During this period 11,155 tenants transferred to smaller dwellings, yet the number of underoccupied dwellings increased by 14,700. The following extracts are taken from the discussion contained in the report:

(i) *Older cottage estates with few small dwellings:* The Council's stock of dwellings has been erected over a period of 70 years or more and the provision on individual estates reflects the needs of the time. Thus on the older cottage estates there are very few 1 or 2 person dwellings and in some cases (e.g. Castelnau Estate) there are none. This has a very important bearing on the extent to which it is possible, humanely, to deal with under-occupation. Elderly tenants who have lived for most of their lives on a particular estate often cannot face a move to a flat in a completely different and unfamiliar environment and unless more small dwellings can be offered in or near the estates where they are living, little can be done to relieve the situation.

(ii) *Effect on married sons' and daughters' quotas:* Since 1953 the Council has been allocating vacancies on its estates to Borough Councils who nominate from their waiting lists the married sons and daughters of tenants on those estates. Often the nominees, though sharing part of the dwelling, are in other respects adequately housed with their parents and their being accommodated elsewhere has accentuated the under-occupation figure. Since 1960, 2,300 families have been accommodated.

(iii) *Parlour-type houses:* A high proportion of the larger cottages on inter-war estates are of the parlour type with two living rooms. A five-roomed house will therefore have only three bedrooms and a four roomed parlour type house only two bedrooms. All the five-roomed houses are of this type and approximately

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

38% of the four-roomed houses. This factor inflates the number of dwellings shown as under-occupied by normal grading standards.

(iv) *Flatted estates:* The position at flatted estates is much better than at cottage estates; hence 8.3% of tenants occupy dwellings which have two or more spare rooms compared with 20.9% on cottage estates. There are three main reasons for this:

(a) the older flatted estates contain a better proportion of small dwellings than the older cottage estates;

(b) it is often much easier to move a tenant to a modern flat from an old flatted estate in the inner areas than from an outlying cottage estate, and

(c) the relative age of cottage estates is greater than that of flatted estates since new production is largely concerned with flatted estates.

A better balance of dwelling types

197 In reviewing the possibilities for future action the Greater London Council report discusses how far it is possible to increase the proportion of small dwellings. If the sole objective were to decrease underoccupation there would be a strong case for maximising the proportion of small dwellings in new building. Currently 32½% of new dwellings provided by the Greater London Council are designed for one and two persons. (The other proportions are: three persons, 5%; four persons, 35%; five persons, 22½%; six persons or more, 5%). These proportions are a compromise between immediate and long-term needs. The immediate needs are for the rehousing of tenants displaced for slum clearance and redevelopment schemes and the transferring of families in overcrowded accommodation. The long-term issue is that of the 'mix' of dwellings on the estate in relation to overall demographic trends. To build an estate predominantly of small dwellings would create acute problems for the future precisely the opposite of those which it would (theoretically) go some way towards solving. But in any case it is undesirable to have too large a concentration of elderly tenants on one location. This is so even with 'infilling' (i.e. developments on vacant sites on or near existing developments). Infilling does, however, provide an opportunity for creating a better balance of dwelling types in an area.

198 Experience has shown that the solution to the problems of lack of balance must be local ones. Though some elderly tenants are attracted by the new and expanding towns[1] and by the seaside

[1] And more could be attracted than current policies permit: see *The Needs of New Communities*, Report of a Sub-Committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee, HMSO, 1967.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

bungalow developments being sponsored by the Greater London Council, many old people wish to end their days in the locality in which they have lived for many years. The Greater London Council (like all authorities from which we received evidence) do not compel elderly tenants to move and it has always proved possible to find sufficient willing tenants to move to the available smaller dwellings. A scheme of allowances for removal and other incidental expenses has eased some of the problems of transfer as has the Council's rent rebate scheme.

199 The Greater London Council survey and report underlines the long-term implications of policy. Though part of the 'problem' of underoccupation stems from the fact that people are now living longer and can afford to maintain their independence, some of it is a direct result of the concentration by local authorities on building larger-type dwellings over a long period of time (during which period they have been virtually the sole providers of new rented accommodation). This points to the need to review policy for new building over a long period ahead.

200 *Our conclusion is that far too much is made of the 'problem' of underoccupation. The real problem is that of providing a good balance of house types in each locality and assisting the movement of those who are occupying dwellings of a size which they themselves consider to be too large.* A comparatively good use of space has been achieved in the council house sector. A sensible and sensitive policy of facilitating movement to smaller dwellings should be continued. Disturbance and removal allowances can assist this, but the major issue is that of providing the right size of dwellings in the right places. Furthermore, it should not be assumed that tenants agree that they are underoccupying a house. The criteria applied are arbitrary and, with rising standards, possibly irrelevant. Attention should be focused on providing small dwellings for, and assisting the movement of, tenants who want smaller accommodation. Some may prefer to take in lodgers rather than move: this should be encouraged, particularly since the supply of lodgings in the private sector is declining. It is not within our terms of reference to advise whether lodger charges should be abolished, but we think that local authorities should consider this.

201 Finally, we refer to the practice of a number of authorities who 'withdraw the subsidy' from tenants who refuse to move from underoccupied property. This again can be adequately discussed only in relation to overall rent policies, but we see no reason why a small household should not pay more for a larger house than a smaller one. If, because of a low income, the household is eligible for a rent rebate, this should not have the effect of removing the differential. (There is, of course, a more intricate problem where a household is receiving a rent allowance from the Supplementary Benefits

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Commission, but to enter into a discussion of this would take us well outside our terms of reference).

Redecoration of vacated houses

202 One problem which arises, particularly in southern England, is that of the high cost of redecoration when a house is vacated. Indeed, some local authorities hesitate to encourage transfers and exchanges for this reason. In the midlands and the north this does not appear to be a problem for the simple reason that interior decoration is a tenant's responsibility. Interior decoration to a vacated dwelling is undertaken when the dwelling is considered to be in such poor condition that it would be unreasonable to expect an incoming tenant to take it over in that condition. *We think that this is a good principle which could be copied with benefit by all authorities.*

203 The costs of redecoration involve not only the direct expense but also the foregone rent while the property is being redecorated. Some local authorities have found that it is cheaper for them to give monetary allowance or rent-free weeks in lieu of redecoration. This has apparently proved popular with tenants. Where responsibility for interior decoration rests with a local authority, or where a vacated house is in poor decorative condition, we think that this is a good system.

204 A distinction needs to be drawn between a move requested by a tenant and one being made at the instigation of the local authority. In the former case, though the local authority should be as helpful as possible, we see no reason why they should be put to large expense. In the latter case, the local authority should be prepared to meet removal and disturbance expenses. The principles to be applied will vary according to the local housing situation.

Transfers of tenancy

205 There is one final matter we wish to raise in this chapter, namely the transfer of tenancies on the death of a tenant or in cases of desertion, separation or divorce. Unfortunately this was one of the many issues which time did not allow us to pursue and we can only pinpoint some of the problems.

206 Council tenants do not have the protection of the Rent Acts. Neither does the Matrimonial Homes Act 1967, apply to them.

207 Though we have not investigated the matter at all thoroughly we understand that local authorities differ widely in the extent to which they confer rights on their tenants similar to those enjoyed by private tenants. It has been suggested to us that some problems

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

could be circumvented by the use of joint tenancies for parties who have an equal moral claim to the tenancy, particularly in cases of separation or desertion. One witness strongly argued that husbands had an unfair advantage in that they were almost always the sole tenants of council property and that (in his experience) often retained possession of the property even though the wife and children had become homeless. We do not know how typical this is, but we were assured that many authorities are able to overcome the problem by following a policy of "tenancy follows the children". Local authorities face a difficult situation here and are reluctant to become involved in matrimonial disputes in advance of court action.

208 So far as transfer of tenancies to adult children is concerned, a distinction is usually made between children who have been living in the parental household for a considerable time (which is defined in different ways) and those who have been living separately or have only recently joined the parental household. In the former case transfer of tenancy is common; in the latter less common—though much depends on the nature of the local housing shortage.

209 *We think that there is a need for further consideration of these issues. Our preliminary view is that the position of council tenants should be neither more nor less favourable than that of private tenants.*

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Chapter 6
Housing and labour mobility

210 Ministry of Housing and Local Government Circular 2/67,[1] issued in January 1967, drew the attention of local authorities to 'the importance in the national interest of facilitating the redeployment of labour and the extent to which housing difficulties are an obstacle to mobility'. We have found it difficult to establish how far current policies are in fact hindering the mobility of labour.[2] With the time and resources available to us we have had to restrict ourselves to a rapid review of the situation, an examination of a number of questions, and a statement of some general principles.

Regional differences

211 Clearly, residential qualifications, if strictly enforced, must tend to inhibit mobility. Our evidence shows that local authorities (outside London) generally make exceptions for key workers, but there is considerably more reluctance to give any special consideration to those who are simply wishing to move following a change of job and who cannot claim any 'key' status. But the situation differs markedly between different areas. In development areas, it appears (in the words of the Board of Trade) 'that there has been little difficulty over the years in obtaining the co-operation of the local authorities concerned' in housing key workers. The problems which were put to us mainly concerned the time lag which sometimes occurs between the recruitment of a worker and the allocation of a house: 'This means that the worker has had to live in what is often expensive rented accommodation in the interim period and we have heard that, in some cases, it has led to financial and domestic difficulties of sufficient severity to result in employees leaving their jobs rather than continue to wait.'[3] This is a problem which needs to be watched, but it seems that it is not a general one.

---

[1] Welsh Office Circular No. 6/67.

[2] Some of the complexities are examined in L. C. Hunter and G. L. Reid, *Urban Worker Mobility*, O.E.C.D., 1968 and J. B. Cullingworth, *Housing and Labour Mobility*, O.E.C.D., 1969

[3] Evidence of the Board of Trade.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

212 Some problems may arise because of inadequate consultation between the public authorities concerned. For instance, the East Anglia Economic Planning Council stated:

'As the Regional Study recently published by the Planning Council shows, East Anglia has a considerable problem in the changing nature of employment combined with a very rapid population growth. Some members of the Council have shown concern about indications of a lack of consultation and co-operation between local authorities in their policies of allocation of housing, and therefore the Planning Council would stress the importance of a close relationship so as to facilitate the movement of workers within the region.'

213 The Northern Economic Planning Council stressed that the problem in their region was not so much the allocation of council houses ('most local authorities adopt a liberal policy') as 'the relative lack of suitable existing executive housing'. This was thought to inhibit the movement of industry 'which might otherwise be attracted'.

214 The problem in the South East Region is much more difficult. This was clearly set out in the evidence of the South East Economic Planning Council:

(i) In general the Council would favour the adoption of policies by local authorities which facilitates the redeployment of labour within the region to best advantage. Present indications are that industry is likely to face a continuing shortage of labour especially in the period to about 1975, but to draw in a net increase of labour from other regions or abroad to meet the gap would tend to worsen the housing situation. It is therefore in the interests of the region to make the best use of its existing labour force by making it possible for workers to move to those sectors of employment where they are most needed and by providing in a limited number of cases for key workers outside.

(ii) The Council recognises that the housing situation in London itself presents special problems. There is insufficient room within Greater London to provide decent homes for all those at present living there. Many families already have to spend too long on waiting lists before being housed. The overspill programme therefore is an essential element in meeting their needs by providing homes and work in new and expanding towns beyond London. In this sort of situation it would be unreasonable to expect housing authorities to adopt policies which might attract additional families to London. Within Greater London itself, however, the Council consider that housing policies should be so framed as to offer the minimum discouragement to people wishing to move their employment from one part of London to another.

(iii) In such circumstances it is clearly necessary to try to ensure that the ability of workers to move to new work and of firms to secure sufficient labour of the right kind is hindered as little as possible by inability to find housing. To this end and whilst recognising the difficulties facing housing authorities, the Council suggest that where a man is already a Council house tenant every effort should be made by the authority in the area to which he is transferring his employment, to allocate him a house through the exchange of tenancies with someone proposing to move out of the area. Many authorities operate tenancy exchange schemes and the Council see no reason why the practice

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

should not be universal. Indeed the Council would like to see such exchange schemes operated without restrictions and in a more positive way so that those tenants who might be interested in moving are made more aware of the possibilities.

215 These extracts from the evidence illustrate the different problems of different areas. *They underline the difficulty that would be involved in laying down generally relevant and acceptable principles except in the broadest terms.* However, it may be that, except probably in the South-East, conditions are changing and that in the not too distant future housing policies may need to be geared more closely to economic policies. The West Midlands Economic Planning Council pointed to this:

'In a few years the effective housing demand for public housing may fall significantly, but not uniformly, throughout the region. The Council considered that in such circumstances public housing could be used as a sharp tool of economic planning, to guide people to areas where there would be net economic advantage in increasing the output of goods and services, and exploiting local resources. Such a role could, however, only be defined adequately after further study.'

The role of local authorities

216 In our two previous chapters we have stressed that it is important for local authorities to accept and consider applications, and to facilitate exchanges and transfers. Such approaches are of obvious relevance to labour mobility. To quote Circular 2/67:

'The Ministers . . . ask all local authorities to look again at their practice in accepting applicants on the housing waiting list and in allocating tenancies, with a view to giving sympathetic consideration to applicants who need family accommodation in their areas to take up local employment. The Ministers are not asking that these families should take priority over those already on the waiting lists, which will often include many who have earlier moved into the area to take up employment. They do ask authorities, first to be prepared to accept applications from incoming workers who have no past associations with their areas, and secondly to make housing need the main consideration in allocating tenancies.'

217 We entirely agree, but would go further. First, in giving 'sympathetic consideration' to applicants moving to work in the area account needs to be taken of the problems facing a newcomer. The very fact that he may have no previous associations with the area makes it more difficult for him to solve his housing problem without assistance. This points to the need for some form of housing advice service to which we make further reference below.

218 Secondly, we draw particular attention to the needs of the single worker and the desirability for local authorities to take some responsibility particularly for the increasing number of young

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

people who are taking up jobs away from their home districts. (This is discussed further in Chapter 8).

Information and advice

219 Elsewhere in our report we refer to the need for a housing advice service. This has particular relevance to a person moving to a job in a new area. A recent report (dealing with Western Europe as a whole) has highlighted the problems:

'It is important to stress that almost irrespective of the local housing conditions migrants need assistance in finding appropriate houses. Houses unlike workers are inherently immobile. A worker who moves cannot take his house with him. He must find a house in a locality to which he is moving. This, of course, is obvious. What is not so immediately obvious is that the housing market is so fragmented and unorganised that it is not an easy matter to ascertain what is available. It is on this basic "information service" that, in all countries, the clearest gap appears in the services rendered to the migrant worker. It is here that a major improvement in services is needed.

It should not be assumed, however, that the gap can be filled easily. Indeed, with the variations in the "organisation" of housing supply in different countries it is virtually impossible to suggest a generally applicable formula. All that can be done is to describe an ideal system which might prove to be a useful guide to action.

The worker moving to a new area needs to know what types of houses can be obtained, on what conditions and at what prices. He needs to know how he must apply for a tenancy, or obtain a mortgage. He may need to be given advice on the financial implications of taking a particular type of house: liability for tax and repairs for instance. He may be unaware of restrictions which are imposed, for example, on sub-letting. He will want to know for what subsidies or grants (if any) he is, or could be, eligible. If he wishes to obtain the tenancy of a house provided by a public authority he will need to know how to register and what the rules of eligibility are. Where employers provide assistance towards housing costs he will want to be informed of the nature of this assistance and whether he could qualify.

An active agency dealing with these matters could rapidly achieve a detailed knowledge of the local housing markets. It could establish links with public and private providers of housing, with voluntary bodies concerned with problems facing newcomers, with mortgage institutions and with house agents. It might also be able to tap new sources of housing supply such as sub-lets of large houses. Given financial backing it might even assist in the actual provision of new houses.

How such an agency would fit in with an existing administrative organisation would vary. In some cases it might be preferable for a voluntary organisation to be responsible. Within the context of the present discussion it would appear that the obvious place to locate the service would be within the local manpower authority office. However, a service of this nature would undoubtedly be of benefit to many others besides migrant workers. From this wider point of view there would probably be a strong argument for locating it elsewhere. However, to start a service of this kind on a broad scale might be difficult, and since there is a particularly acute need for it in relation to migrant workers, it might be considered that the

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

balance of advantage, at least initially, lay in making it explicitly a manpower authority service."[1]

In the British context this now needs to be considered in relation to the Seebohm Committee's recommendations.

Tied council houses

220 Secondly, we are concerned about the practice followed in a number of areas of tying council houses to particular firms. In extreme cases termination of employment with the firm concerned leads to eviction. We think this is a thoroughly undesirable situation. Sometimes firms make a special contribution to a local authority to assist in the provision of council houses for a transfer of workers to the area. We see no objection to this as long as there is no danger of tenancies being tied.

221 Our view (which appears to be shared by the majority of local authorities) is that there should be no tying of council houses to particular employers. We are very unhappy about the minority of schemes where a local authority regards an employer as the tenant. In these cases the local authority charges the firm an economic rent, while the firm sublets to its employees on the condition that they remain in the firm's employ. It was reported to us that 'such arrangements are normally subject to certain safeguards which may vary from council to council, e.g. at the date of occupation the employee's name may be entered on the council's housing list and when he reaches the top of the list be becomes a direct council tenant and pays the normal subsidised rental; under another scheme the employee takes over the direct tenancy of the house after a specified period of occupation (five or ten years), even though he may subsequently leave the company'.

222 These arrangements appear to us to be inherently unsatisfactory. In assessing the housing needs of their areas local authorities should have regard to the needs of industry. If workers are needed for the economy of an area the local authority have a responsibility to ensure that adequate housing is provided. To make conditions is a denial of this responsibility. If workers need council houses ordinary tenancies should be offered.

223 We received evidence on the housing problems facing a number of particular groups: for example prison staff, policemen and agricultural workers. Clearly there are advantages in tied housing, both for the employer and the employee. But there are also some very considerable disadvantages. In the first place it is difficult

---

[1] *Housing and Labour Mobility*, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1969.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

to match supply and demand. The problem of inadequate supply is well known and formed a major point in the evidence given to us. The problem of inadequate demand may be less prevalent, but we are concerned that it may lead to a restriction of choice simply on the grounds that the employer has dwellings which have to be let.

Rehousing from tied houses

224 More prevalent (and more clearly within our terms of reference) are the problems facing tenants of tied houses when they retire or change their jobs. An idea of the scale of the problem is indicated by some figures which were given to us: the majority of the 8,500 prison officers are housed in official married quarters; nearly half of the current strength of 90,000 policemen live in police houses; an estimated 7,500–10,000 agricultural workers occupying service houses leave the industry each year[1] (316 possession summonses were issued in 1966 against members of the National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers[2]); and about 20,000 married men leave the Forces each year.

225 Each of these (and other groups ranging from resident park-keepers to bishops) have rather different problems. All would benefit from a better organisation of housing information and advice. A number of bodies exist to provide this for special groups, while some employers (particularly the Defence Departments) provide advice on all aspects of 'resettlement' including housing. Unfortunately, though we received evidence of difficulties, this was largely of an anecdotal character. It is, therefore, difficult to measure or even ascertain the scale of the problems which arise.

Ex-servicemen

226 The problems likely to face ex-servicemen (and likely to be shared by other groups) are set out in Part II of the 1955 report entitled *Residential Qualifications:* there is no need for us to go over the same ground in detail again. Our evidence shows that most local authorities deal sympathetically and fairly with applications from ex-servicemen and similar groups. The problems which arise are essentially the same as those facing civilians who have severed their ties with their homes area and therefore are dealt with in the sections of our report on residential qualifications. The Ministry of Defence, in their evidence, asked only that there should be 'parity of

---

[1] Estimate made by the National Farmers Union.

[2] Number given by the National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

treatment' for servicemen: this would be achieved 'by removing all restrictions on their acceptance on housing lists; once they are on the list they should be considered on the same basis of housing need as any other applicants'. We would go further and argue that ex-servicemen, like other migrant workers, should receive special consideration simply because they are migrants. This does not mean, of course, that ex-servicemen as a group should have a priority claim for housing. This would go against our recommendation that priority ought to be given to social need rather than housing need. Ex-servicemen will differ as much as any other group. Our point is that ex-servicemen as a group may have problems in resettlement which should give them special consideration. Sometimes these problems can be very acute, particularly if a servicemen has 'lost' all his roots and is looking for both a job and a house. We think that local authorities should try to be specially helpful in such cases and certainly not insist on a job being obtained before a house can be offered.

Professional key workers

227 We have said that local authorities need to pay particular attention to the housing needs of key workers required for the economic development of their areas. The claims of the public services, which now provide a very large share of the opportunities and services expected in a healthy and developing community must not be forgotten. We have in mind particularly the schools and the health and welfare services. Many of these professional key workers—teachers, doctors and social workers for example—may wish to buy their own homes. Steps should be taken to ensure that they have the opportunity of doing this whether through the private market, through housing societies, or by building for sale by local authorities.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Chapter 7
Rehousing obligations

228 Our terms of reference specifically require us to examine 'rehousing'. We have interpreted this to include the obligations, policies and problems of local authorities in rehousing people displaced by *any* public action. This wide interpretation is dictated by the simple fact that the rehousing problems are much the same whatever the reason for action or the statutory powers used.

The statutory framework

229 Local authorities have no statutory obligation to rehouse families displaced from houses compulsorily acquired for general housing purposes under Part V of the Housing Act 1957. At one time Part V was generally used to acquire undeveloped land for new housing but it is now frequently used in relation to developed land. There are also powers for acquiring land for redevelopment in the Town and County Planning Act 1962. Section 84 of this Act provides that authorities must ensure that suitable alternative accommodation is available for persons displaced by the redevelopment of land acquired for planning purposes.

230 There are special provisions for rehousing persons displaced by action under Part III of the Housing Act 1957 which deals with slum clearance areas. The relevant section is Section 42. The proviso to Section 42(1) and Sub-Sections (2) and (3) read:

'Provided that before passing any such resolution (i.e., resolution declaring an area to be a clearance area) the authority shall satisfy themselves:

(i) that insofar as suitable accommodation available for the persons who will be displaced by the clearance of the area does not already exist, the authority can provide, or secure the provision of, such accommodation in advance of the displacements which will from time to time become necessary as the demolition of buildings in the area or in different parts thereof, proceeds; and

(ii) that the resources of the authority are sufficient for the purpose of carrying the resolution into effect.

A local authority shall forthwith transmit to the Minister a copy of any resolution passed by them under this section together with a statement of the number of

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

persons who on a day specified in the statement were occupying the buildings comprised in the clearance area.

A local authority who have passed a resolution declaring any area to be a clearance area shall, before taking any action under that resolution which will necessitate the displacement of any persons, undertake to carry out or to secure the carrying out of such rehousing operations, if any, within such period as the Minister may consider to be reasonably necessary.'

231 Houses included in a clearance area must be unfit or badly arranged, but adjoining fit houses can be included in an order if this is necessary to provide a satisfactory area for redevelopment (Section 43(2)). It is generally held that the rehousing obligations apply equally to such houses, but the statutes are not specific on this point. There are no statutory obligations in relation to the rehousing of persons displaced by demolition or closing orders under Part II of the Housing Act, 1957.

232 Statutory undertakers are bound by the provisions of Section 144 and the Ninth Schedule of the Housing Act 1957 to submit to the Minister of Housing and Local Government a housing scheme where the undertaker takes dwellings occupied by 30 or more persons, unless the Minister decides that such a scheme is not necessary. The scheme must make provision for the accommodation of such number of persons as the Minister considers necessary in the circumstances, subject to the number not exceeding the total displaced. For the purposes of this provision statutory undertaker means any authority, company or persons who are acquiring land compulsorily or by agreement under any local act, provisional order, or order having the effect of an act, or are acquiring land compulsorily under any general act. It covers all local authorities empowered to carry out a public undertaking (e.g. highways or schools) except local authorities acting in their capacity as housing or planning authorities, who are specifically exempted but caught up by the special provisions in the housing and planning acts referred to above. For some years now the Minister has dispensed with the need for formal 9th Schedule schemes and instead is prepared to accept an assurance from the local authority concerned that any necessary rehousing will be provided.

233 The procedure for Part III action is set out in Ministry of Housing and Local Government Circular No. 75/54. When a local authority declares a clearance area they must submit a copy of the resolution to the Minister. The information and documents which should accompany this resolution are set out in Appendix I to the circular. These include an undertaking, strictly in the statutory wording, to carry out all such rehousing as the Minister may consider to be reasonably necessary. Councils are also required to give an indication of their rehousing proposals, i.e., details of whether and how any necessary rehousing will be carried out. Provided an undertaking is

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

given the Ministry does not concern itself with the details of the actual rehousing.

234 In the last resort the Minister could determine how the obligation is to be met but in practice it has been the policy of successive Ministers not to interfere with the way authorities go about it. Councils are considered to be responsible bodies susceptible to local opinion and their detailed knowledge of local housing conditions and wide control over their pool of accommodation enable them to decide these matters for themselves. Provided a local authority recognises its obligations towards those living in a clearance area and in any adjoining property acquired at the same time, at the date when the relevant clearance or compulsory order is made, the Department would not normally be concerned to intervene.

235 Advice on how to interpret the term 'persons' in considering who shall be provided with council accommodation was given to local authorities in Ministry of Housing and Local Government Circular No. 33/56. This stated that the Minister thought that it would be reasonable to regard owner-occupiers, tenants and sub-tenants and married children, but not individual lodgers, as separate families. This advice was repeated in paragraph 19 of the seventh report of the Housing Management Sub-Committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee.[1] This remarked that lodgers were excluded on the grounds, no doubt, that persons living in furnished premises could find accommodation elsewhere. The report advised, however, that where anyone had lived for many years with a particular family and was regarded almost as one of its members, he should be allowed to move with it; and the family should be allowed a house big enough to permit this.

The practices of local authorities

236 From this review of the statutory framework it is clear that local authorities have differing obligations under different statutes and that they have a significant area of latitude in interpreting these obligations. We have examined the evidence made available to us by the Ministry, local authorities and others and report the following as the facts of the situation.

237 The Ministry reported to us that while generally local authorities consider themselves under an obligation to rehouse persons from clearance areas, i.e., houses found to be unfit for occupation, some take the view that they are under no obligation to rehouse families displaced from 'grey' areas, i.e., areas of fit property added to

[1] *Moving from the Slums,* Seventh Report of the Housing Management Sub-Committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee, HMSO, 1956.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

clearance areas to form a satisfactory area for development. Unfit houses are, of course, acquired at site value while fit or 'grey' houses are acquired at full market value. Tenants of houses whether fit or unfit are invariably accepted as eligible for council houses but some councils consider that owner-occupiers of houses which are being acquired at full market value can in many cases fend for themselves and provide their own alternative accommodation. Though there is no statutory obligation to rehouse persons displaced by individual demolition and closure orders, local authorities generally accept a moral obligation equivalent to their obligations in relation to clearance areas.

238 Other evidence supports these generalisations, but we found wide variation in the way in which these various obligations were interpreted in practice. We also found considerable disquiet about this variety of practices. Attention focused on the 'persons' in relation to whom rehousing obligations are accepted, and the 'operative date' for the assumption of obligations.

239 It appears that only a minority of households in clearance areas[1] are registered on local authority housing lists.[2] However, from such figures as we have been able to collect it seems that in most areas the majority of households living in clearance areas are rehoused by local authorities, but it is not clear whether the figures relate to *all* who are living in clearance areas at the relevant date (the definition of which we discuss below) or exclude those who are considered by the local authority to be ineligible on the ground that suitable alternative accommodation does exist or on the ground that they are newcomers to the area who could not expect to be rehoused.

240 Though the statistics are inadequate in themselves, other evidence we received, both from local authorities and others, clearly demonstrates that some households are, as a matter of policy, made ineligible for rehousing (Table 10).

241 Quite apart from these particular groups, other households may be excluded from a local authority's rehousing obligations if they move into a clearance area after the 'operative date' (Table 11). Some local authorities will not accept any responsibility for households moving in after this date (Table 12).

---

[1] Throughout this report we frequently use the term 'clearance areas' to include areas being redeveloped under Part V of the Housing Act 1957.

[2] Evidence on this is scanty: most local authorities do not keep the relevant figures. The matter is also complicated by the fact that some local authorities delete all 'slum clearance applicants' from the housing list, while others automatically add all unregistered (eligible) families to their list.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Table 10

Eligibility for Rehousing from Clearance Areas

	No. of authorities who said they would rehouse:				No. of authorities replying
	Always	Usually	Exceptionally	Never	
Unfurnished tenants	70	12	—	—	82
Unfurnished sub-tenants	52	19	5	2	78
Furnished tenants	58	18	4	—	80
Furnished sub-tenants	44	19	11	2	76
Lodgers[1]	24	9	34	14	81
Single people	49	17	10	3	79
Owner-occupiers	54	22	5	—	81

[1] Those authorities who do not rehouse lodgers except as part of the household in which they are living are included in the column 'exceptionally'.

Table 11

Operative Date of Eligibility for Rehousing

	No. of authorities
Date of survey	10
Date of resolution	16
Date of confirmation of C.P.O.	48
Other dates	10
	84

Table 12

Action taken in Relation to Households Moving into an Area after the Operative Date

	No. of Authorities
Each case dealt with on its merits	37
No rehousing obligations accepted	33
Situation not arisen	14
	84

'Alternative' accommodation

242 In so far as suitable alternative accommodation does already exist local authorities are under no obligation to rehouse. Furthermore, there is no necessary one-to-one relationship between the number of houses to be demolished and the number to be provided by new building, even if everyone in the area is to be rehoused

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

by the local authority. In some parts of the country, the housing situation is such that little new building is required: all those who are displaced can readily be rehoused either in existing council houses or in the private sectors. In other parts, however, new houses are required at least on the scale of the clearance. With such extreme variations clearance and new building cannot be generally equated. Since, however, there is now no specific subsidy for houses built in replacement of slums (as there was under the Housing Subsidies Act, 1956[1]), the conditions which relate to subsidies are immaterial to the issue with which we are concerned. Nevertheless, the Ministerial advice which was given in relation to past subsidies still apparently influences policy. Under the 1956 Act, the Minister required local authorities to certify the number of *families* to be displaced. Indeed, the form of certification required the names and addresses of the families concerned. It was in this connection that the Ministry gave the advice indicated in paragraph 235 above. Within the 'changing context of local authority housing' discussed in Chapter 1, this advice is no longer appropriate. In particular there are increasing difficulties facing the single person household. It cannot be assumed that 'suitable accommodation' does exist for such households.

243 The same applies to other tenure groups excluded by some authorities. Tenants of furnished accommodation can be in a particularly difficult situation for several reasons. First, the supply of furnished accommodation is in decline: 'alternative' accommodation may therefore not be available. Secondly, some authorities tend to regard furnished tenants as 'transients'. Of course some are—in the sense that they are only staying in an area for a short time. But these have a need for short-term accommodation: this need has to be met, and we think that local authorities (within the wider approach to their local housing situations discussed earlier) should ensure that it is met. If necessary it should be met by direct provision by the local authority itself. However, by no means all tenants of furnished accommodation are 'voluntary transients'. Especially in large towns, and above all in London, many are in this type of accommodation simply because they have been unable to obtain an unfurnished letting. Some are 'transient' by necessity: they have limited security of tenure and are constantly on the move in a search for better accommodation. Then again some are not in any sense transients. Evidence we received from a number of organisations showed that some furnished tenants are of very long standing: because the furnished sector as a whole is characterised by its mobility it does not follow that it lacks stable elements.

244 Thirdly, there are problems concerning the definition of

---

[1] See Ministry of Housing and Local Government Circulars Nos. 33/56 and 2/57.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

'furnished' lettings. As one of our witnesses put it, 'the term "furnished" is often a mockery, and the neighbourhood centre has had its modest share of victories in the courts where its case-work and legal advice have produced proof that a few sticks failed to justify a furnished letting. This has brought reclassification and the hope of being rehoused'. Another witness gave his opinion that 'at least 30% of the tenants of privately rented accommodation in the area (a London Borough) and probably more are only nominally furnished and so deprived of most of the protection of the Rent Acts . . . they are not usually rehoused by the Council'. We received a considerable amount of evidence on this issue, much of it centred on the question of the inadequacy of the protection afforded by the Rent Acts. This does not fall within our terms of reference, but quite clearly if the line between 'furnished' and 'unfurnished' is difficult to draw it does not provide a fair basis for discrimination in rehousing. *But in our view, a tenant of furnished accommodation has the same rights in relation to rehousing as a tenant of unfurnished accommodation. Any vagueness in the law should be rectified.*

245 Owner-occupiers also have the same rights. Again it cannot be *assumed* that suitable alternative accommodation exists. Particularly in London 'alternative' houses may be very difficult to find at prices equivalent to the market value compensation paid for acquired properties.

A redefinition of rehousing obligations

246 We think that the principle should be firmly established that the rehousing obligations of local authorities should extend to all households and parts of households (irrespective of size or tenure). This principle should apply irrespective of the reasons for the displacement or the statutory powers used.

247 Nevertheless, within the wider approach we are recommending local authorities to adopt, we do not think that the obligation should necessarily be to provide a council house. A household may prefer to purchase a house or rent from a private landlord or a housing association or society. All choices ought to be open, and local authorities should assist displaced households to obtain their individual choices. In short, *the obligation of local authorities should be to ensure that displaced persons are satisfactorily rehoused.* Rehousing by local authorities should be one of the choices, but not the only one. At the same time, it is not enough merely for a local authority to be satisfied that 'alternative accommodation exists': they should be required to ensure that all persons displaced are in fact satisfactorily rehoused.

248 This will require amending legislation. *We therefore recommend*

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

that local authorities should be required by statute to ensure that every person displaced by public action is satisfactorily rehoused. This recommendation is in harmony with the considerable evidence we received that clarification and standardisation of rehousing obligations was desirable. We wish to make it clear that the rehousing obligations should extend to all household types and all tenure groups.

249 The question of the 'operative date' is more difficult. Some local authorities rehouse all who are living in an area at the date on which the houses are acquired and who wish to be rehoused. But in many areas, it is considered necessary to exclude those who have recently moved into an area on the grounds of equity. Here the fear is that clearance and redevelopment operations may become (in the words of one of our witnesses) 'a vehicle for deliberate queue-jumping'.

250 While appreciating the natural anxiety on this issue we think that there is a tendency for some real problems to be underestimated. One great difficulty is the long period which elapses between the start of operations, i.e. between the declaration stage and the stage when rehousing actually takes place. It may sometimes be three or four years where a large area is involved or where rehousing is delayed because of complications about redevelopment. There may be many changes of tenancy during this period. In some cases families will have moved in, unaware that these legal processes are going on. In other cases families will have deliberately moved into the area, either as tenants, sub-tenants or lodgers, in the expectations of a short cut to a council house. This is a problem which cannot be solved by co-operation with the landlords. They cannot be expected to hold property empty for an indefinite period with a consequent loss of rent. In any case this can lead to the accelerated deterioration of adjacent property.

251 On the other hand, in areas of severe housing pressure, if too generous an approach were adopted, local authorities might find it impossible to cope with the influx of families into an area prior to demolition. Yet these are the very areas where there tend to be long delays in the confirmation of Orders.

252 There is no easy answer to this problem. Some authorities—Birmingham in particular—are relieved of it by their practice of purchasing large areas well in advance of clearance. The houses are thus under their control and no problems of 'influx' or 'queue-jumping' are experienced. *We recommend that this policy should be followed whenever practicable.*

253 On a smaller scale, where property is not unfit, it was suggested to us that since compensation is not at risk the difficulty can be solved by co-operation with owners who may be willing to sell by agreement.

254 We were impressed by the policy of one large authority who told us that they follow as a broad rule that they will accept full

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

responsibility for rehousing any person or family living in an area *for at least one year before clearance begins.* We commend this policy to all local authorities. We do not, however, think that it would be practicable to make this a statutory requirement. Nevertheless, we do think that a definite 'date-obligation' is required and that this should be later than the date of the council resolution. At this stage clearance is still only a proposal: until a compulsory purchase order has been confirmed the proposal has no statutory effect. In our judgement *the rehousing obligations (redefined as above) of local authorities should operate from the date on which the relevant Order becomes operative.*

255 We have no doubt that this is right in principle. Nevertheless we are aware that in London (and there may be similar areas elsewhere) this may be unworkable: the local authorities would be quite unable to cope with the influx of people that could be expected. The problems facing the local authorities will, in any case, be increased if our recommendation concerning rehousing obligations is implemented. We have been warned in no uncertain terms (and we accept the force of the argument) that, if the principle were applied to inner London, clearance and redevelopment would be brought to a halt.

256 We are extremely concerned about this. Our worries are increased by the evidence which we received to the effect that those being rehoused from clearance and redevelopment areas 'are frequently rehoused from considerably better conditions than those left on the general waiting list'. We cannot, however, within our remit consider the wider issues involved. But it is clear that exceptions to our general principle will have to be made for a small number of authorities in areas of severe housing pressure.

257 *We therefore recommend that the Minister of Housing and Local Government should have discretion to substitute an earlier date for the operation of rehousing obligations in areas where it is impracticable for the date to be that on which the relevant order becomes operative.* This power should be used only in exceptional circumstances and should be revoked as soon as possible.

258 The fact that a local authority's responsibilities are limited in this way should not, however, preclude them from considering the position of people who come to live in the area subsequently and who need rehousing when redevelopment occurs. Clearance may not take place until some time after the submission of the Order, and it would be unreasonable to expect that houses falling vacant should not be reoccupied in the normal way. (Prior acquisition would help, but it is not always practicable). Most authorities, even in areas of acute pressure, do consider the needs of such people where they are satisfied that it is a 'genuine' case and not a ruse to 'jump the housing queue'. The operation of a special Ministerial

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

dispensation should not prevent this sympathetic approach continuing.

Publicity

259 It is essential that when the intentions of an authority to buy property for clearance and/or redevelopment first become known, they should take steps to explain the position to those affected. *We recommend that these steps should include leaflets to all occupiers and to owners where they are known, and continuing publicity on where and how to get further information.* In large schemes a well advertised public meeting[1] and, in particular, a temporary information office on the site could be an advantage. Measures of this kind should help to allay anxieties and uncertainties about the probable time scale of subsequent action and at this stage assurances should be given that rehousing will be offered, so far as needed, to those already living in the area.

260 We regard good publicity as an essential part of good local government. There is a general need for this in relation to all the housing responsibilities of local authorities: a matter which we discuss more fully in Chapter 3. However, in areas where a special dispensation is given by the Minister the publicity must be even more intensive. The limitation of the authority's rehousing obligations should be widely publicised and steps taken to ensure that all people coming into the area after the relevant date know that they will not normally be rehoused. This should be made clear at the same time as the statutory notices are posted in the area, served on householders, published in the press, and so forth.

Eviction of furnished tenants

261 We have to draw attention to a further difficulty facing tenants of furnished accommodation. We have been told that owners seek to get rid of furnished tenants prior to acquisition since 'vacant possession' price is significantly higher than the value with sitting tenants. Cases have been quoted to us of harassment. A Council for Community Relations in a London Borough underlined the problems which faced families who are unsure of their rights: 'Without a firm promise of future housing and (even when advice and assistance is available) faced with a long course of negotiations with officials while bearing all the time with the pressure from landlords, the ordinary coloured person will give in and join the long queue of people searching the notice-boards for furnished accommodation elsewhere'.

[1] See Appendix 3.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

262 Unfortunately, we cannot ourselves suggest any solution to this problem without stepping well outside our terms of reference.

Reduced compensation for owner-occupiers rehoused by local authorities

263 As the previous paragraph implies, questions of compensation do not fall directly within our terms of reference. There is, however, one issue which is intimately related to the allocation of council houses which has been brought to our attention and which falls to our consideration. This is the practice followed by a number of local authorities of reducing the compensation paid for properties acquired from those owner-occupiers who are rehoused in council houses.

264 It may be useful if we start with a summary of the legislative position. Generally, all land and buildings acquired compulsorily are paid for at full market value, but slum clearance is a special case. Here the compensation code is based on the premises that the public should not pay anything for houses which have been found to be unfit to live in: by definition an 'unfit' house has no value. Compensation is thus, in principle, limited to the market value of the site as if it were cleared of all buildings and ready for development. This rule was first introduced in 1919 and has been upheld by every Government since then. (It is now to be found in Section 59 of the Housing Act 1957). The principle has, however, been qualified from time to time. Thus 'supplementary payments' are payable on 'well-maintained' properties[1] and for certain categories of business occupiers.[2] Owner-occupiers of unfit houses have a right to apply to the Courts for the discharge or modification of any outstanding mortgage liability.[3] Very small sites which would attract only nominal compensation may be affected by the 'gross value limit'; this provides that no owner-occupier shall receive in compensation less than the gross value of the house.[4] Certain discretionary payments can be made, e.g. for removal expenses.[5] Furthermore, extra-statutory payments may be made in exceptional circumstances. These are subject to Ministerial sanction which, though not legalising the payment, removes it from the purview of the District Auditor. Additionally to these provisions, 'supplements' are payable to certain owner-occupiers.

---

[1] Housing Act 1957, Sections 30 and 60, and Part I of the Second Schedule.

[2] Housing Act 1957, Paragraph 6 of Part II of the Second Schedule.

[3] Housing Act 1957, Paragraph 5 of Part II of the Second Schedule.

[4] Land compensation Act 1961, Second Schedule.

[5] Housing Act 1957, Sections 32 and 63.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

265 The latter supplements were introduced in 1956 when the slum clearance programme (suspended during the war) was resumed. Owner-occupiers who bought their houses between 1st September 1939 and 12th December 1955 (when the resumption of clearance was announced) were entitled to a supplement which brought their compensation up to full market value. This provision was due to expire after ten years (on the 13th December 1965), but it was prolonged by the Housing (Slum Clearance Compensation) Act 1965 for those qualifying owner-occupiers who have not had fifteen years' possession of their houses.[1]

266 The justification for the site value rule is that the public should not be expected to pay for houses which have been found unfit for human habitation and which are to be demolished as quickly as possible. This rule is thought by the Government to have worked well generally and it has been recently restated as a principle.[2] But in recent years some local authorities have been moving into areas of 'better' slums, a good proportion of which may be owner-occupied. Legislation now before Parliament provides for an extension of supplementary payments to all owner-occupiers of at least two years' standing, and an increase in 'well-maintained payments' for unfit tenanted properties.

267 This account of the compensation code in relation to slum clearance underlines the detailed attention it has received from Parliament. There is little area of discretion. Furthermore, in all cases of dispute there is a right of appeal to the Lands Tribunal, an independent body appointed by the Lord Chancellor.

268 However, the legislation is not clear on the position of dispossessed owner-occupiers who are rehoused by local authorities. Some councils consider that owner-occupiers of houses being acquired at full market value can in many cases fend for themselves and provide their own accommodation. This is a matter which we have already discussed but of particular concern here is the extension of this line of thinking to matters of compensation. Some councils take the view that, if they give an owner-occupier a tenancy and the benefit of a subsidised rent, this has a value and they ought not to have to pay him as much for his existing house as its full value in the market with vacant possession. This practice is often justified on the grounds that the council, in fact, are not acquiring the house with vacant possession, but occupied by a 'sitting' owner.

269 Our inquiry among a sample of local authorities revealed that 15 per cent made a reduction in compensation if they rehoused an owner-occupier. Two authorities followed an alternative approach and charged the householder a higher rent than he would have paid had he previously been a tenant.

---

[1] Housing Act 1957, Sections 31 and 61, and Part II of the Second Schedule.

[2] *Old Houses into New Homes,* Cmnd. 3602, HMSO, 1968, paragraph 46.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

270 In their evidence to us on this issue, the Chartered Land Societies Committee stressed that a person whose house is acquired by an authority possessing compulsory purchase powers is entitled to the full statutory amount of compensation; and that the provision of alternative accommodation by the acquiring authority can have a bearing only on the quantum of compensation for disturbance by the elimination of legal costs, surveyors' fees, and travelling expenses incurred in seeking and acquiring alternative accommodation. On this view, an acquiring authority has no right to require an 'abatement' of the compensation payable for the interest acquired on the ground that it is providing the claimant with a council tenancy. It is true that a claimant might be persuaded by an authority to agree to accept less than his statutory entitlement to compensation for this reason and that such an agreement might not be void or voidable unless by misrepresentation.

271 In our view, it is wrong for an acquiring authority to seek to persuade a dispossessed owner to accept less than his full statutory entitlement to compensation, even if an agreement to accept such a reduced amount could not be upset in a court of law. Compensation and rehousing are quite separate issues. Local authorities have no power to reduce compensation, but they do have discretion in determining whether to rehouse a dispossessed owner-occupier. Their discretion should not be used to affect the former.[1] Indeed, it is clear that if the spirit, as distinct from the letter, of the law were observed an owner-occupier who could not obtain alternative accommodation could not be refused a council tenancy on the ground that he was unwilling to accept a reduction in the compensation for his existing house.

272 Some of the justification for this undesirable practice stems no doubt from the low level of local authority rents in some areas as compared with the cost of house purchase. Indeed, in some cases dispossessed owner-occupiers may be very glad to pay a premium

---

[1] At our request, the Office of the Chief Valuer, Inland Revenue, prepared a note on the abatement of compensation, from which the following is an extract:

'In cases where compulsory powers have been exercised or are available, but where an authority is under no obligation to rehouse, an authority undertaking to rehouse dispossessed owner-occupiers and requiring an abatement in the compensation payable on that account notifies the District Valuer accordingly, stating the amount of abatement required. A District Valuer negotiating under such conditions is instructed to ensure that the claimant fully understands that a reduction, and the amount thereof, is being made by agreement from the amount of the statutory compensation. In short, the District Valuer acts in such cases on the instructions of the local authority, both as to whether an abatement is required and as to the amount thereof'.

We consider it undesirable that the District Valuer can be expected to act in this way.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

in order to obtain a subsidised council tenancy. This is, however, irrelevant to the issue. In any case why should a citizen who has invested his money in a house be required to pay a premium, while one who has invested in stocks and shares be provided with a house with no premium? To our way of thinking this is akin to 'key-money' which, in the privately rented sector has been specifically prohibited by law.[1]

273 We think that this is a matter which requires an amendment of the law. *We recommend that legislation be passed to prohibit the abatement of compensation for owner-occupied dwellings where the occupier is rehoused by a local authority.* We feel equally strongly that the (fortunately uncommon) practice of charging a higher rent to a tenant solely on the grounds that he has received compensation for his house is quite intolerable. We do not think that a legislative provision is appropriate to deal with this, but recommend that the local authorities concerned should consider the general arguments we put forward in this section and the views which we have expressed. Where a rehoused owner-occupier is charged a higher rent on the basis of his income the matter is, of course, quite different.

Removal expenses

274 Local authorities have power under the Housing Acts to pay removal expenses to those displaced by clearance or redevelopment. The extent to which these powers are used varies widely: some authorities give generous allowances to all who are displaced by public action; others restrict their allowances to 'needy' cases; a number give no allowances. Some give wide publicity to the allowances while others keep them 'in reserve' for 'special' cases.

275 The seventh report of the Housing Management Sub-Committee recommended that these allowances should be paid 'whenever the expense of removal could not be met by the tenant without hardship'.[2] There is no mention of 'hardship' in the legislation and, in our view, this is not the criterion on which payments should be made. A person displaced by public action should have a right to a payment, though the level of this payment is best left to the discretion of local authorities.

276 We commend to all local authorities the practice of the Greater London Council, which was reported to us as follows:

'In addition to the waiving of the first week's rent and tenancy deposit, persons who are displaced by the Greater London Council clearance, redevelopment, modernisation, rehabilitation and conversion schemes and entitled to rehousing may submit claims in respect of the following expenditure:

---

[1] Rent Act 1968, Part vii.

[2] *Moving from the Slums*, Seventh Report of the Housing Management Sub-Committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee, HMSO, 1956, page 15.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

(1) The cost of the removal contractor's account *plus* a contribution towards the cost of purchasing or adapting and fitting curtains and floor coverings (and associated items, but not normally furniture) for their new home, up to a maximum of £30 (inclusive).

(2) The cost (in full) of modifying electrical equipment for a change in voltage.

(3) The cost (in full) of disconnecting and re-connecting appliances (e.g. telephone, cookers, refrigerators, water heaters and, at District Officer's discretion, television aerials, etc.).

In exceptional circumstances, other reasonable expenses necessarily incurred in moving may be reimbursed.'

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Chapter 8
Some important needs

In this chapter we single out for discussion a number of needs to which we think local authorities should give particular attention: those of the large family, the elderly, the single, the student (particularly the married post-graduate) and the homeless.

THE LARGE FAMILY

Provision for the large family

277 We have already drawn attention to the decline in the stock of large houses. The number of large families has declined also, but there is a danger that their needs will be overlooked in a preoccupation with the much greater need for small dwellings. Our reason for devoting a section of our report to the large family is a simple one: the large family is a statistical oddity for whom adequate provision is not being made. Many local authorities are reluctant to build dwellings with more than three bedrooms because of the cost involved. Since the war only 70,000 public authority dwellings with four or more bedrooms have been built—out of a total approaching three million. We think that local authorities should consider providing a number of large houses in every major housing development.

278 In a concentration of effort on providing a higher proportion of much-needed small dwellings, it is important that the needs of large families are not overlooked. The appropriate approach was succinctly stated by the Institute of Housing Managers:

'Every sound points scheme should reflect the needs of the large family . . . What is important is to ensure that no large family which rises to the top of the list in housing need points is kept waiting for months after they become due for an offer, simply because the local authority has no vacant dwelling of a suitable size. If it has no such vacancy it should make one! This can be done either by transfer of an existing tenant, by acquiring a suitable house, and if necessary, because the family is very large, by providing two adjoining dwellings and making structural alterations so that the facilities are adequate.

It may be necessary to fix a special rent or a special rebate, to ensure that the rent is within the family's means. As the family grows up the number of earners will increase and the need for special financial help will be reduced.'

279 We should emphasise that we are referring to large families—those for whom a house is required with four or more bedrooms.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

We are not referring to problem families and we strongly deprecate any tendency to confuse the two. Some large families are 'problem' families, and vice versa, but most large families constitute a problem only in the sense that they have difficulty in obtaining a dwelling commensurate in size with their needs and at a rent within their ability to pay.

Acquisition, improvement and conversion of dwellings

280 With this approach we do not think that the needs of the large family can—or should—be met by the acquisition of large substandard houses intended for clearance. (Acquisition and improvement is a very different matter and one for which greater opportunities are provided in the new Housing Bill). We were struck by the evidence on this issue given to us by one housing manager:

'We have not built enough large houses in the past. We have now a policy of converting two into one to help this. In the past, I say this with regret, we have used large houses in the area of redevelopment and I am sure in my opinion this is wrong. One learns from experience. It is very easy to do this when you are buying up large houses. There you have six bedroomed houses suitable for a large family, that is just what they need; it is very tempting, especially when the rent can be right sometimes. It does mean them going into the wrong kind of area inevitably. It means they do not have many of the things they ought to have. It does mean a move later on.'

281 At our request a number of large local authorities analysed the comparative waiting time and urgency of need for three-bedroom dwellings and those of larger size. The results clearly showed that large families on the housing lists are in greater need and have been waiting longer than smaller families. In one city, the 'four-bedroom families' on the housing list had a need (as measured by the points scheme) 20% greater than those of 'three-bedroom families' currently being housed.

282 In a memorandum from one large local authority the position was summarised as follows:

'The Housing Committee have decided to convert a number of three-bedroom pre-war houses into four bedrooms, as part of a general policy which has a number of aims:

a. To bring the proportion of dwellings on pre-war estates more into line with modern requirements. Practically all the pre-war dwellings were three bedrooms and we are now introducing one bedroom, which was completely lacking, and increasing the proportion of four bedrooms, which was no more than 1 or 2%.

b. The conversion of parlour type houses into two one bedroom flats also serves the need for old couples and single people occupying three bedroom houses who are willing to move, but only to another dwelling within the same locality.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

This need cannot be catered for by new dwellings unless existing houses are demolished to provide sites. Conversions are cheaper and more acceptable accommodation, although we may need to do some demolition and rebuilding in two-storey flats to completely meet the need.

c. The Committee has become increasingly concerned at the difficulties we are encountering in housing large families. The problem cannot be overcome by building more four bedroom houses because not only are the rents higher than they can afford to pay, but the expense of central heating and travelling become substantial items in the family budget. We keep the rents of new four bedroom houses as low as we can and, indeed, in many cases the net rent is lower than that of a three-bedroom five person house. The inclusive rent is slightly higher because of the difference in rates. At the same time, the four bedroom group includes the major proportion of the problem families. We do not consider it good management to put these families into new houses where they will not only be in financial difficulties, even with the help of the rebate scheme, but may not be on reasonable terms with their neighbours who maintain better house-keeping standards.

d. Our four bedroom conversion involves building a side addition to an end terrace or semi-detached house. This addition has a garage on the ground floor and a bedroom above. In many cases the garage is not required by the family, in which case they are able to let it to a neighbour for a reasonable rent. These conversions not only enable us to provide four bedroom dwellings at a lower rent than a new house, but they are also in the older established parts of the City where travelling and other costs are less.

e. We are also looking into the possibility of converting some of our two-storey pre-war flats and combining some of the very small pre-war three-bedroom houses.'

We commend this approach to all local authorities.

Rent rebates

283 Some part of this problem can be met by rent rebate schemes. It is a sad commentary on current policy that one local authority could tell us that, in spite of the backlog of need for large dwellings, large families were refusing four and five bedroom dwellings 'because of the rent and in spite of the rent rebate scheme'. Our comment on this is that the rent rebate scheme is likely to be in need of review. *Our recommendations are that local authorities should assess carefully the need for larger dwellings and should ensure that these are provided at rents within the rent paying ability of the families for whom they are intended.*

Rehousing at 'below standard' density

284 There is one further point on which we wish to comment. Some local authorities refuse to rehouse a family at a 'below-

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

standard' density even if this constitutes a significant improvement on their present position: for instance, we came across cases of families needing four bedroom houses (which were not available) who were not allocated three bedroom houses. This is to make the best the enemy of the good—with a vengeance! We would draw attention to Section 79 of the Housing Act 1957 which enables a local authority to grant a licence to an occupant of a house authorising the property to be occupied by a number of persons in excess of the "permitted number". This is a licence granted for twelve months subject to renewal and to cover exceptional circumstances. We see no reason why this power should not be used to justify a local authority in temporarily placing a family in over-crowded conditions if these are an improvement on their existing conditions and if no better alternative is immediately available. *A number of authorities already do this and we commend the practice to all who are not able to do better.*

285 But we return to our main point: large families need large houses. The supply of these houses is shrinking rapidly and we feel that it is the responsibility of local authorities to ensure that the needs are adequately met. We would also add that large houses can cater for families wishing to have their elderly parents living with them (an issue which we discuss in the following section) or to take in lodgers (which we have discussed in Chapter 5).

THE ELDERLY

The scale of the need

286 We have laid stress in Chapter 1 on the declining average size of households and the great increase in recent decades in both the number and the proportion of small households. A major factor here is, of course, the changed age-structure of the population. To illustrate: in 1911 the population aged 60 and over numbered less than 3 million and constituted 8% of the total; in 1967 the figures had increased to over 8¾ million and 18%. According to the 1966 Census, a quarter of households consisted of one or two persons at least one of whom was of pensionable age. This is an increase of over half a million since 1961.

287 We received a large amount of evidence on the housing needs of elderly people. Indeed, we could readily produce a report on this alone; but neither our terms of reference nor the time which was available to us permitted this. Our task is to review allocation policies in relation to the elderly.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

288 Our starting point must be the relatively poor housing conditions of the elderly and the relatively slow rate at which these are being improved. Studies undertaken by academic research workers and by the Government Social Survey show the scale of the problem.[1] For example, the 1964 Housing Survey provides abundant evidence that the standard of housing of elderly households is worse than that of younger households (with the possible exception of households where the head is under thirty). Thus, in England and Wales outside Greater London the proportion of households without sole use of a hot water supply to a sink and of a w.c. in or attached to the building was 36% for households with a head aged seventy or over, compared with 16% for households with a head aged 30–39 and 14% for those with a head aged 40–49.[2] The report entitled *Social Welfare for the Elderly* estimated that a fifth of residents in welfare homes need not have been there if adequate housing could have been made available.[3]

289 The housing problems facing the elderly are in some ways different from those facing younger people. They typically face a problem of too much, rather than too little, space. However, one must beware of speaking of the $8\frac{3}{4}$ million elderly people as if they were a homogeneous group, still less a problem group. The elderly differ as much as the non-elderly in their housing conditions, needs and aspirations. And all that we say on the individuality of people as a whole applies equally to that group which we label 'elderly'. There is therefore no single housing policy—or house allocation system—which can apply to the elderly. Their needs must be assessed with the same care and individual treatment as anyone else. We make this point strongly because of the ease with which one can slip into a simple argument that 'the elderly' need independent accommodation, or housing close to the relatives, or ground floor accommodation, or housing with a warden service, and so on. Different people want different things!

290 Nevertheless, there is no doubt that both provision of dwellings for, and the allocation of dwellings to the elderly has been inadequate. So far as provision is concerned, the proportion of public sector dwellings containing one bedroom has risen from a tenth of those built during the first fifteen post-war years to over a quarter of those built in the 'sixties. More one bedroom dwellings (228,000) were built in the seven years 1961 to 1967 than in the whole of the post-war period up to the end of 1960 (202,000). Annual production in

---

[1] See, e.g. P. Townsend and D. Wedderburn, *The Aged in the Welfare State,* Bell 1965; M. Woolf, *The Housing Survey in England and Wales,* 1964, Government Social Survey, HMSO, 1967; A. Harris, *Social Welfare for the Elderly,* Government Social Survey, HMSO, 1968.

[2] M. Woolf, *op. cit.,* Table 4.25, page 171; see also pages 81–2.

[3] A. Harris, *op. cit.,* Vol. 1, page 47.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

the public sector is now running at a rate of about 40,000. There are, however, no figures to show what proportion of these (or larger dwellings) are allocated to elderly people. As we point out in the following section there is an increasing need and demand for small dwellings not only for the elderly but for the younger one-person household.

291 We are here, of course, on the boundary (possibly beyond the boundary) of our terms of reference. Our concern is with the *allocation* of dwellings, but on this occasion—as on a number of others—we are forced to look at the dwellings available for allocation. We are convinced that there is a large and continuing shortage of small dwellings suitable for elderly people and thus an adequate allocation policy in relation to the elderly is constrained. The evidence we received from local authorities strongly supports this. For instance, the average length of time applicants have to wait for one-bedroom dwellings is considerably longer than that for two and three-bedroom dwellings.

Two-bedroom accommodation

292 We must, however, qualify this by pointing out that elderly people do not necessarily want only one bedroom. It is striking that the private sector provides only very few one-bedroom dwellings—less than 4,000 a year. A 'spare' bedroom is equally useful to a public authority tenant as it is to an owner-occupier. It is here that we come to our first point on the *allocation* of dwellings to the elderly, namely that those who wish to have two bedrooms should be given the opportunity to have them. This applies particularly to elderly two-person households where separate bedrooms may be welcomed or even be necessary on health grounds.

293 Some elderly people may prefer to live with their grown up children. This is in contradiction to the widely held view that the elderly and their grown up children usually prefer to live *near* but not *with* each other. But 'usually' is not 'always'. Evidence submitted to the committee by the Greater London Conference on Old People's Welfare suggested that 'there is probably less demand for housing of old people under the same roof as families than for independent housing, but it does arise and the practice of local authorities, or their ability to cater for this by providing larger accommodation with sufficient bedrooms, appears to vary'. Other suggestions were for self-contained dwellings attached to family houses, for prefabricated temporary dwellings in the gardens of family houses, and for hostel-type accommodation.

294 Another point raised by the Greater London Conference on Old People's Welfare was that there may be a need for housing

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

288 Our starting point must be the relatively poor housing conditions of the elderly and the relatively slow rate at which these are being improved. Studies undertaken by academic research workers and by the Government Social Survey show the scale of the problem.[1] For example, the 1964 Housing Survey provides abundant evidence that the standard of housing of elderly households is worse than that of younger households (with the possible exception of households where the head is under thirty). Thus, in England and Wales outside Greater London the proportion of households without sole use of a hot water supply to a sink and of a w.c. in or attached to the building was 36% for households with a head aged seventy or over, compared with 16% for households with a head aged 30–39 and 14% for those with a head aged 40–49.[2] The report entitled *Social Welfare for the Elderly* estimated that a fifth of residents in welfare homes need not have been there if adequate housing could have been made available.[3]

289 The housing problems facing the elderly are in some ways different from those facing younger people. They typically face a problem of too much, rather than too little, space. However, one must beware of speaking of the 8¾ million elderly people as if they were a homogeneous group, still less a problem group. The elderly differ as much as the non-elderly in their housing conditions, needs and aspirations. And all that we say on the individuality of people as a whole applies equally to that group which we label 'elderly'. There is therefore no single housing policy—or house allocation system—which can apply to the elderly. Their needs must be assessed with the same care and individual treatment as anyone else. We make this point strongly because of the ease with which one can slip into a simple argument that 'the elderly' need independent accommodation, or housing close to the relatives, or ground floor accommodation, or housing with a warden service, and so on. Different people want different things!

290 Nevertheless, there is no doubt that both provision of dwellings for, and the allocation of dwellings to the elderly has been inadequate. So far as provision is concerned, the proportion of public sector dwellings containing one bedroom has risen from a tenth of those built during the first fifteen post-war years to over a quarter of those built in the 'sixties. More one bedroom dwellings (228,000) were built in the seven years 1961 to 1967 than in the whole of the post-war period up to the end of 1960 (202,000). Annual production in

---

[1] See, e.g. P. Townsend and D. Wedderburn, *The Aged in the Welfare State,* Bell 1965; M. Woolf, *The Housing Survey in England and Wales,* 1964, Government Social Survey, HMSO, 1967; A. Harris, *Social Welfare for the Elderly,* Government Social Survey, HMSO, 1968.

[2] M. Woolf, *op. cit.,* Table 4.25, page 171; see also pages 81–2.

[3] A. Harris, *op. cit.,* Vol. 1, page 47.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

the public sector is now running at a rate of about 40,000. There are, however, no figures to show what proportion of these (or larger dwellings) are allocated to elderly people. As we point out in the following section there is an increasing need and demand for small dwellings not only for the elderly but for the younger one-person household.

291 We are here, of course, on the boundary (possibly beyond the boundary) of our terms of reference. Our concern is with the *allocation* of dwellings, but on this occasion—as on a number of others—we are forced to look at the dwellings available for allocation. We are convinced that there is a large and continuing shortage of small dwellings suitable for elderly people and thus an adequate allocation policy in relation to the elderly is constrained. The evidence we received from local authorities strongly supports this. For instance, the average length of time applicants have to wait for one-bedroom dwellings is considerably longer than that for two and three-bedroom dwellings.

Two-bedroom accommodation

292 We must, however, qualify this by pointing out that elderly people do not necessarily want only one bedroom. It is striking that the private sector provides only very few one-bedroom dwellings—less than 4,000 a year. A 'spare' bedroom is equally useful to a public authority tenant as it is to an owner-occupier. It is here that we come to our first point on the *allocation* of dwellings to the elderly, namely that those who wish to have two bedrooms should be given the opportunity to have them. This applies particularly to elderly two-person households where separate bedrooms may be welcomed or even be necessary on health grounds.

293 Some elderly people may prefer to live with their grown up children. This is in contradiction to the widely held view that the elderly and their grown up children usually prefer to live *near* but not *with* each other. But 'usually' is not 'always'. Evidence submitted to the committee by the Greater London Conference on Old People's Welfare suggested that 'there is probably less demand for housing of old people under the same roof as families than for independent housing, but it does arise and the practice of local authorities, or their ability to cater for this by providing larger accommodation with sufficient bedrooms, appears to vary'. Other suggestions were for self-contained dwellings attached to family houses, for prefabricated temporary dwellings in the gardens of family houses, and for hostel-type accommodation.

294 Another point raised by the Greater London Conference on Old People's Welfare was that there may be a need for housing

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

together two or more elderly people who are friends or relatives but not a married couple. This demand is thought to be small, but it is suggested that it may increase as the occurrence of two generations within the pensionable age group becomes more common. The recent report by the Government Social Survey entitled *Social Welfare for the Elderly* provides evidence for two of the areas studied on the proportion of elderly households wanting to move (and eligible according to the existing policy of the particular local authorities concerned) which consisted of combinations of people other than a single elderly person or an elderly couple. In the Sheffield sample there were 17 out of 91 (representing an estimated total of 2,170 out of 11,640 elderly households wanting to be rehoused). In the Salisbury Borough sample there were 9 out of 26 (representing an estimated total of 113 out of 326).

295 This suggests that the demand for dwellings with more than one bedroom may be considerably larger than might be supposed. Further support to this view is given by the data in the 1966 Sample Census. Of the $2\frac{1}{4}$ million two person households containing persons of pensionable age, two-thirds of a million were other than married couples. Over a third of a million consisted of a parent and a child, and an eighth of a million consisted of unrelated persons. Some relevant figures are given in Table 13. These amply illustrate the importance of detailed demographic data in formulating housing policies.

Table 13

One and Two Person Households Containing Persons of Pensionable Age. 1966 Sample Census

Total one and two person households containing persons of pensionable age	3,759,840
OF WHICH:	
One Person households	1,520,040
Two Person households	2,239,800
Analysis of Two Person Households	
Total	2,239,800
Married Couple	1,573,360
Parent and Child	367,640
Other relatives	171,850
Unrelated	126,950
Single Sex Two Person Households	
Two Males	37,630
Two Females	303,250

(Source: Sample Census, 1966, *Household Composition Tables,* Tables 36 and 37).

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Residential qualifications and the elderly

296 We discuss residential qualifications at some length in Chapter 4. Here we are concerned solely with their impact on the elderly, increasing numbers of whom move, or wish to move, on retirement, on bereavement, or after an incapacitating illness. As the Seebohm Committee point out, 'under the present varied rules about waiting lists there are some old people who will never qualify for housing by a local authority because of residential qualifications which debar them'.[1] Fortunately, as the housing situation improves, more and more local authorities are abolishing or relaxing their residential rules. On the other hand, with the shortage of dwellings suitable for elderly people rules may be applied specifically to the elderly even if they are not applied more generally. (One northern local authority, which had no residential qualification for admission to the 'general' list had a twenty-five year rule for the elderly!) If our general recommendation in Chapter 4 is accepted, elderly people wishing to move to a new area will be able to register an application for a council house without fulfilling a residential qualification. This will enable an elderly person's application to be assessed and due priority to be given to it. This is already the practice in a number of authorities. Only in this way is it possible to assess the relative claims of different applicants.

297 The evidence we received suggests that there are at least six ways in which elderly people may be debarred from council houses by residential rules:

(i) Elderly people who, for one reason or another, give up their houses on moving into hospital.

(ii) Elderly people who, because of the nature of their employment, have been highly mobile.

(iii) Those who wish to move from an isolated rural area to a less isolated location which happens to be in the district of another local authority.

(iv) Those retiring from employment to which their housing was 'tied' and which is in an area with little or no council accommodation, or who again wish to settle in another area.

(v) Elderly people who wish to move to be near younger relatives living in other parts of the country.

(vi) Those who break their residence connection by moving to live with relatives in another area, but who for various social reasons wish to return to the area which they have left.

298 Local authorities often face difficult decisions in trying to weigh the claims for these with those who are already in the area

---

[1] *Report of the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services,* Cmnd. 3703, HMSO, 1968, paragraph 418.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

grounds for so doing. In the study to which we have already referred (in paragraph 300), however, a small number of authorities did operate a bar and there are grounds for fearing that this could exclude needy elderly people. As a rough generalisation it appears that, in 1965–66 the income bars encountered would disqualify a family of four with a net 'assessed' income of more than about £20–£22 a week, or a single person with an income of more than about £8–£9 a week. The authorities concerned claimed that income bars did not usually affect elderly applicants, whose income is usually below the limit. However, a proportion of elderly people (e.g. those with only a small occupational pension in addition to the state pension) could be affected. The Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance enquiry in May–June 1965[1] shows that 11 per cent of single elderly men, and 8 per cent of single elderly women had total incomes of £8–£10 per week and a further 6 per cent of men and 4 per cent of women had total incomes of £10–£12.10s. per week.

305 Several of those who gave evidence to us urged that those who are financially better off should not be excluded for this reason alone. It was pointed out that elderly people who are better off relative to other elderly people may still have insufficient money to purchase a modern house, or a house in an area where housing costs are high. Elderly people are likely to have extreme difficulty in raising a mortgage from a building society. No factual evidence has been obtained on the extent to which elderly people with some capital raise finance for house purchase by taking out an annuity with an insurance company. This is well established in the U.S.A., where there is also a system of public guarantees for those who lend to the elderly.[2] In the absence of facts on some of these issues the situation is far from clear. It seems possible that the moderately well-off elderly have poorer prospects of changing houses within the owner-occupied sector (or of acquiring one if they have previously lived in tied accommodation) compared with younger people. There is a big field for enquiry here. All we can say is that we have already stated that it is fundamental that no one should be precluded from applying for, or being considered for, a council tenancy on any ground whatsoever. It follows that, in our view, there should be no income bar to *consideration* for the allocation of a council tenancy.

Elderly people and 'housing need'

306 From what we have said so far it is abundantly clear that we hold no narrow view of 'housing need'. For us a person in housing

[1] *Financial and Other Circumstances of Retirement Pensioners,* HMSO, 1966 Table II.1, page 9.

[2] H. J. Loether, *Problems of Ageing,* Dickenson Publishing Co., 1967, page 47.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

need is simply one who has a need for housing different from that which he currently occupies. (Whether he should be allocated a council house or not is a different question). This approach is of particular significance for elderly people, many of whom are not in housing need on the usual indices used. We totally reject the view that tenure, age or income is necessarily an appropriate indicator. *All* cases should be considered.

307 But there is a further point. Some (though a minority) of authorities still measure housing need solely in terms of sharing and overcrowding. On this approach an elderly person in great need (e.g. because of factors such as those we list in paragraph 303) would be ineligible for council housing.

308 It was suggested to us on a number of occasions that 'points' ought to be awarded for underoccupation. We sympathise with the approach and commend the suggestion for consideration by local authorities. But we would prefer a more comprehensive social assessment of need. The danger in approaching the needs of elderly people via underoccupation is that less consideration is given to needs than waste of space. We particularly deprecate the practice followed by a small number of authorities in reserving all their one-bedroom dwellings for elderly tenants transferring from under-occupied council houses. This has the effect of totally precluding elderly people in the private sectors (whose housing situation may be far worse) from consideration. We have discussed under-occupation more fully in Chapter 5.

THE SINGLE

The increasing need

309 Increasing numbers of single people are seeking separate accommodation. In 1951, 10.7% of households consisted of one person only but by 1961 the proportion had increased to 13.4% and by 1966 15.4%. The actual figure in 1966 was 2.4 million. Of these 2.4 million one person households, 860,000 are under pensionable age: this is an increase of about a fifth since 1961. A further increase will take place in the future. If the supply of suitable accommodation does not expand significantly, single people will be forced to share accommodation. Alternatively they may compete with larger households for family type accommodation (thus, incidentally, increasing the amount of underoccupation). One aspect of this issue is thus the general one of the relationship between the

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

size-distribution of households and dwellings. We have already discussed this issue in relation to the elderly. Here we are concerned with younger single people.

310 First, it is important to note that the supply of traditional types of accommodation suitable for single people is declining. Bedsitters, 'flatlets', lodging and boarding accommodation is declining as a result of a number of factors. With a rising standard of living, fewer households with space to spare are willing to sub-let. Social security provisions and supplementary benefits work in the same direction. It has been suggested to us that controls over multiple occupation and rents, and, perhaps of equal importance, apprehension about these controls, also act as a deterrent.[1] Furthermore, major changes in the structure of housing supply have a particular impact on the single, for example the reduction in the number of privately rented (unfurnished and furnished) accommodation units due to sales to owner-occupiers and the redevelopment of slum and 'twilight' areas where many young people occupy 'flatlets' and bedsitters.

311 Redevelopment raises problems of which households are to be rehoused by the local authority. We discuss this in Chapter 7, but the point of immediate relevance here is that, even if particular single-person households are held to be ineligible, the fact remains that the supply of accommodation for this type of household is being reduced. The very mobility of young single-person households militates against a recognition of their needs, especially when a local authority focuses its attention on long-standing needs and housing lists. Few local authorities provide accommodation for single people as part of the normal housing programme, and they generally concentrate their resources on providing housing mainly for families and for the elderly. Yet if childless couples are housed—why not single people?

The desire for self-contained accommodation

312 The demand for separate housing for the single increases with affluence, the rate of economic change and the degree of mobility. We were impressed by the evidence obtained in the course of a study being carried out by the Ministry's Sociological Research Section. This underlined the desire of the single for self-contained accommodation, a desire which cuts across income and age groups.

---

[1] It should be remembered that multiple occupation is defined 'as a house which, or any part of which, is let in lodgings or which is occupied by members of more than one family'. Thus, strictly speaking, a single sub-letting constitutes multiple occupation.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Communal living holds little attraction. Accommodation within an institution, or which has to be shared, is only tolerated in the absence of anything better, and is not regarded as an acceptable substitute for 'a place of one's own'. A self-contained one or two-roomed flat with a kitchen and bathroom would satisfy the great majority of the single people interviewed.

313 The study identified two main groups of need. First, there were middle-aged single people who required permanent modern accommodation, unfurnished, and at reasonable rents (many of these single people were earning less than £10 per week). The second group was that of young single people for whom space is not so important since they spend so little time at home. What most of them hope to find is a furnished bed-sitting room which they can rent on a short term basis—having no wish to acquire property and furniture which might restrict their mobility. Some have to be ready and willing to move to another area with their jobs, and many of them expect to marry, so that at this stage in their lives they are not looking for permanent accommodation. Some of these young people do not mind sharing accommodation with friends if it saves money. For the majority, however, rent levels do not appear to be a major concern since most of them earn high wages—in many cases enjoying a better income than middle-aged single people. They are willing to pay more for their accommodation in proportion to their income than are older tenants. This group also includes young people at present living at home who would prefer to live independently of their families, were suitable accommodation available.

314 A rapid rate of economic change involves greater mobility. More young people are now taking jobs away from their home districts, and the higher the level of education, the higher the rate of movement.[1] Career opportunities abound in the larger urban centres to which young people are attracted in large numbers.

315 In our sample of local authorities, most accepted applications from single people, but priority was generally given to the elderly. (A few authorities accepted applications only from single people over the age of 50). The general impression we received was that, given the shortage of small local authority dwellings, little attention could be given to younger single people.

The role of local authorities

316 *In our view local authorities ought to give attention to the needs of the single and accept a responsibility for ensuring that their needs*

[1] A. I. Harris and R. Clausen, *Labour Mobility in Great Britain, 1953–63*, Government Social Survey, HMSO, 1966, Table 8, page 9.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

are adequately met. However, this does not mean that local authorities themselves should necessarily provide more dwellings for single people. Much could be done through other agencies such as housing associations and societies. Nevertheless, in the present situation it may be that in certain areas direct provision by local authorities may be the only way of meeting the needs.

317 Some needs could be met by the provision of hostels, for which special Exchequer grants are available,[1] but we were impressed by the main conclusion of the Ministry's study that the overwhelming demand is for self-contained accommodation. Sharing of such accommodation (for those who want to save rent) would be preferable to the more traditional hostel-type accommodation. To go further into requirements of design and layout would take us well beyond our terms of reference.

STUDENTS

318 Much of what we say on single people applies to students and apprentices, but their problems warrant special mention. An adequate analysis of the problems of accommodating students (whether in 'housing' or hostel-type accommodation) would lead us outside the field of our current inquiry. Nevertheless, we feel that it is necessary to refer to one major problem, viz, that of married postgraduate students.[2]

Married postgraduates

319 It has not been the policy of the University Grants Committee to devote any Exchequer funds from the universities' building programmes to the purpose of providing accommodation for married postgraduates, and as a result the amount of accommodation which universities are able to provide for such students is extremely limited. What little does exist has been provided through the generosity of benefactors or financed from limited private funds. Although from time to time, where it can be shown that other forms of residential accommodation—such as lodgings—are not available, the University

---

[1] See *Housing Subsidies Manual, Housing Subsidies Act, 1967* HMSO, 1967, pages 36–38. The maximum grant is £15 per bedsitting room per annum for 60 years.

[2] The following section is based on the evidence submitted to us by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Grants Committee makes provision for a limited amount of hostel accommodation, this is restricted to single students only: the University Grants Committee taking the view that it is the responsibility of a married postgraduate to find and finance accommodation for himself and his family.

320 The University Grants Committee has consistently taken the view that provision of accommodation for married students falls outside their terms of reference, as also does the provision for university staff. It is not for us to question this: rather is our concern with the situation which results from this and other disadvantages facing the married student.

321 Married students are rarely able to purchase a house (even if it would be appropriate for them to do so). The only way, therefore, in which they can obtain the financial assistance given to others is by way of a subsidized local authority dwelling.

322 Married postgraduates rarely have any chance of obtaining local authority housing under existing arrangements, since they live within the area of the university usually only for one or two years, or for three years at the most. Frequently, the university concerned is not that in which the student spent his undergraduate days, and still more frequently, it is not in the town of his birth or of his parents or relatives. However, although the individual postgraduate families are in residence only for a few years, the total number of such families in an area at any one time is fairly constant—with a tendency for it to increase.

323 In their evidence to us, the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals said that in the experience of the universities this demand is combined with other factors 'to promote a serious and probably growing shortage of suitable accommodation . . .' Our own analysis of current trends in the housing situation amply confirms this.

324 The number of married postgraduate students now at universities is not known, but it is thought that such students constitute approaching a third of the total postgraduate student population of about 34,000, i.e. around 10,000. This refers only to postgraduate students in universities: we suspect that their problems are shared by married students in other institutions at both the postgraduate and undergraduate level.[1]

325 In reviewing this problem we conclude that the number of students in general, and the numbers of married students and postgraduates in particular are increasing at the very time when suitable accommodation for them is declining. We also conclude that married students fall between the two stools of housing and education.

---

[1] See the *Papers on Student Residence and Student Life* of the Research Unit for Student Problems, University of London.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Vacations

326 There is one difficulty which may be thought to be a crucial objection to the provision of local authority accommodation for students. This is that university terms extend over only half a calendar year, and the long vacation is for a period of nearly three months. This may be a difficulty in relation to unmarried undergraduate students, but we do not think it is relevant to married students. It is also to be noted that the nature of postgraduate work requires the student to be 'in residence' for a longer period each year than is the case with undergraduates.[1]

Our recommendations

327 We therefore recommend that:

(i) *A review should be undertaken of the housing of students.* We do not feel that we should define this more clearly, but we are clear that it should be supported jointly by the Department of Education and Science and the Ministry of Housing and Local Government.

(ii) *In the meantime, local authorities should have regard to the needs of students and assist in the provision of suitable accommodation, particularly for married postgraduates, who should be eligible for the allocation of council houses.*

THE HOMELESS

The inadequate basis for policy

328 Homelessness is a subject on which far more is said than known. We have been surprised at how little is known about it and the inadequacy of the available data. Until there is a better understanding of the nature of the problem policy cannot be soundly based. We warmly welcome the announcement of a study commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Security. In view of this study (and the shortage of time available to us) we have not attempted anything approaching an adequate examination of the problem

[1] Grants for postgraduate work are awarded on the basis of full calendar working and the Department of Education and Science ensures that such grants are fully earned.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

The short space which we devote to it, however, should not be taken as an indication of the importance we attach to it.

Definitions

329 The term 'homelessness' is used in many different ways. At the extremes it is taken to mean a family who literally are totally without anywhere to live and a family who has an inadequate home. The gradations between these two extremes are many, but typically reference is made to the National Assistance Act 1948 (Section 21(b)) which places an obligation on welfare authorities to provide temporary accommodation for persons who are in urgent need thereof, being need arising in circumstances which could not reasonably have been foreseen, or in such other circumstances as the authority may in any particular case determine.

330 Several points are of immediate importance: 'homelessness' (in the more technical sense of the term) is a responsibility of welfare authorities, not housing authorities; the statutory definition is broad and capable of differing interpretations; and though attention focuses on homeless *families*, the legislation refers to *persons.*

331 'Welfare' is a function of county councils and county borough councils (in London, the London borough councils). Thus in administrative counties the welfare authority is different from the housing authority. But even in county boroughs 'welfare' is almost always the responsibility of a department different from that for housing. There is thus a general problem of policy and administrative co-ordination.

332 The Seebohm Committee recommended that housing departments should assume responsibility for providing accommodation for homeless families. This issue lies outside our terms of reference, but we have no hesitation in stating as a principle that in so far as homelessness is a housing problem it should be a major concern of housing authorities in the allocation of council houses. Unfortunately, it is by no means clear how far homelessness *is* a housing problem: to a major extent the problem may frequently lie deeper. On the other hand, it may be largely a result of severe local housing shortages. The homelessness study should assist in clarifying this.

The policies of local housing authorities in our sample[1]

333 We asked the local housing authorities in our sample how they defined homelessness and what their policy was in dealing with it.

[1] We stress again that our sample was not uniformly representative of all local authorities. See Appendix 2.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

(We must point out that we did not approach welfare departments). The definitions used by the London Boroughs were all fairly stringent, the most liberal being 'families under threat of a Court Order', or 'having no tenancy to defend' or 'being made homeless other than by a Court Order'. Some required that the eviction should be by Court Order only, should actually have taken place or that the family should have no accommodation for the next night with no relations to go to. In one case, the council stated that they required that the family should be homeless 'through no fault of their own'. In another authority, the family must have children of school age before they came within the council's category of persons to be helped, while in yet another the term 'homeless' was applied only to those previously occupying unfurnished accommodation.

334 The policies of the London borough housing departments in relation to homelessness varied greatly. Some said they gave homeless families top priority for rehousing, while others insisted on a residential qualification before a family could be considered for either permanent or temporary accommodation. Generally, however, stress was laid on the need to 'treat each case on its merits'. One authority, for example, said:

'There are so many variable factors on eviction cases that no formula common to all could be devised which would ensure fair and equitable treatment in each particular case. If an applicant is rehoused direct into a council dwelling from accommodation which may have long been adequate for his needs (and for his family where appropriate) this can only be at the expense of persons awaiting rehousing off the waiting list from overcrowded or unsuitable accommodation. Hence the importance of giving very careful consideration to the background of each individual case particularly where the welfare of children or elderly persons is concerned.'

335 The definitions of homelessness offered by the county borough council housing departments were most often simply 'lack of shelter'. Seventeen county boroughs gave this definition, though three of them qualified it by saying that the circumstances should be due to 'unforeseen circumstances', and another requiring that a home had been *lost,* rather that that the family should be newly arrived in the city. Most of the other definitions referred to evictions and Court Orders, though there were only three cases in which a Court Order or residence in Part III accommodation was taken as the only definition of homelessness. For example, one authority gave evicted familes, marital break-up or returning ex-servicemen as three categories covered. Only one housing authority would not house families evicted for rent arrears.

336 Action on homelessness was most usually the provision of temporary accommodation (under Part III of the National Assistance Act) by the welfare department. Thirteen authorities specifically mentioned 'welfare housing', though some also said they rehoused

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

permanently people who were nominated by the welfare department after a stay in Part III accommodation. In many cases it was not clear from the replies whether it was the welfare or housing department who took responsibility. In six cases, homeless families were helped 'on merit' if their circumstances were not 'their own fault'. However, some housing departments did accept responsibility for rehousing. On the more positive side, a number of authorities mentioned the importance of the prevention of homelessness, the avoidance of splitting up families, and the rehabilitation of homeless families.

337 Many of the municipal boroughs and urban district councils had little experience of homelessness and some none at all. In addition, a few of those who did give definitions of homelessness were clearly referring, not to emergency homelessness, but to what they considered homeless cases on their list. Thus, one housing authority commented that 'All applicants lacking a separate dwelling are treated as homeless'. Such an approach highlights the rarity of emergency homelessness in the smaller authorities. Similarly the rural district councils in our sample said that they seldom encountered homelessness, but a number referred to evictions from tied accommodation. Definitions tended to be very broad, and one authority went so far as to define it as 'persons who have not the security of being a tenant or owner of self-contained property'. In this authority the policy was 'to give priority to the applicant and to house them in the first available property'.

338 A review of our evidence shows how great are the differences between different areas, not only in terms of policy, but also in terms of housing pressure. The London situation is in a class by itself.[1] Another important point arising is the frequent equation of homelessness with evictions.

Eviction orders

339 Some local authorities will not rehouse a family threatened with eviction unless a court order has been obtained. This has recently been criticised as an 'abuse of process' in *The Solicitors' Journal* (14th February 1969):

'It is now common for local authorities to adopt a policy of not rehousing tenants threatened with eviction until an eviction order has actually been obtained. The practical effect of this is to increase the burden on county courts with a procession of possession cases to which the defendant tenant can have no possible defence, and often does not want to raise one. The judge is simply asked to rubber stamp a legal situation about which there can be no argument. What do the local authorities

---

[1] See Chapter 10.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

gain? First, an indisputable authority that the tenant is not entitled to remain where he is. But in many cases, particularly those concerned with furnished accommodation, a knowledge of the rules and an examination of the relevant papers would make it just as clear. Secondly, they gain time. But it is only a matter of weeks, and what justification is there for them to encourage the tenant to deny the landlord his undoubted rights? Against these gains must be set the losses. In many areas, the delays in obtaining county court hearings are unreasonably long, and these unnecessary cases are contributing to the delay. The cases involved spending time and money without real purpose. Finally, it is unfortunate to encourage tenants to go to court, where they may reasonably assume that the judge is to decide issues between them and their landlords, only to find that there is no argument in their favour at all. Obviously there are some cases which are not clear, and with the shortage of council accommodation it would be right to rely on the courts to decide these. To use the courts as a wholesale time-wasting device is an abuse which should be stopped.'

340 On the other hand, there are real problems of collusion which face a local authority which readily accepts a notice to quit at face value. We were told of numerous cases where notices to quit were signed by landlords who were close relatives and where the authority were convinced that this had been issued to assist a family to obtain a council house. We were warned of the danger of furnished tenancies being offered 'for sale' with a guaranteed notice to quit! Less extreme was the fear that a 'liberal' attitude towards evictions would encourage landlords to take a harder line with tenants and thus increase the number of evictions. Finally, local authorities are naturally reluctant to usurp the functions of the Courts, particularly in cases where there are statutory provisions relating to the security of tenure.

341 *In our view local authorities are right in treating each case on its merits and in sometimes insisting on court proceedings. The rule should be to assess each case carefully and, where the local authority are satisfied that a tenant will be evicted, not to insist on court proceedings.*

Arrears of rent

342 Our examination of the problems of eviction have led us to the issue of rent arrears. This can often lead to homelessness, though our discussion goes further afield.

343 In the 1959 report, *Councils and their Houses,* the previous Housing Management Sub-Committee stressed that

'rent arrears are the most frequent sign of family difficulties and they sometimes occur among tenants who are by no means of the problem family type or even in financial need. A family may, for instance, fall behind with the rent because of illness, domestic upset or simply through bad budgeting, or too much hire pur-

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

chase. *In all cases, prompt action to prevent arrears from accumulating is essential* and it is very desirable that an experienced officer should deal with the matter.'[1]

We examined the policies of some thirty authorities in relation to rent arrears. Our attention was focused on two main questions: first, the policy on the housing of applicants in serious housing need who were in arrears of rent; and, secondly, the policy towards their own tenants in arrears.

344 Most of the local authorities expected rent arrears to be paid before they would house an applicant, but stress was generally laid on 'flexibility' and the need to consider each case on its merits. Some authorities will not allocate a house until some time after arrears have been cleared: periods of up to one year were mentioned. At the other extreme are those authorities who regard rent arrears to a private landlord as a matter for the tenant alone, while others do not regard rent arrears as a barrier to rehousing but try to ensure that they are cleared as quickly as possible.

345 Much more leniency is shown to council tenants who are in arrears of rent, and eviction is resorted to only in extreme cases. A general picture of procedure emerges. After repeated calls and warning letters, a more senior housing assistant will usually call to discuss the reasons for arrears and try to give advice. This may result in social work help and arrangements to pay the arrears in instalments. Letters are often sent to follow up visits which may be numerous and tenants may be called into the offices for interview. Many authorities try to take a firm line with threat of eviction after three or four weeks before arrears become excessive which is usually found to work. The family may be moved to cheaper accommodation or have all privileges removed if in arrears. The next stage may be discussion of the case to recommend further action by committee which will often have representatives from child care, social security, health, welfare and housing departments. Court action will usually only be taken if there is no reason for the arrears or the tenant is unco-operative and arrears are still continuing. Even then a suspended order may be made on payment of a weekly sum specified by the Court. Court action is often dropped at even some indication of the tenant's willingness to start paying off arrears. Besides social casework with the families financial help is frequently mentioned in the form of rent rebates, rent guarantees from the children's department, direct payment to the authority of social security benefits for rent and grants and loans from welfare and charity organisations.

---

[1] *Councils and Their Houses, Management of Estates,* Eighth report of the Housing Management Sub-Committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee, HMSO, 1959, paragraph 126.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Rent guarantees

346 We were surprised how few local authorities appeared to use rent guarantees. We understand that this follows from a somewhat narrow interpretation of the relevant statutory provision. Section 1(1) of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, provides that:

'It shall be the duty of every local authority to make available such advice, guidance and assistance as may promote the welfare of children by diminishing the need to receive children into or keep them in care under the Chidlren Act 1948, the principal Act or the principal Scottish Act or to bring children before a juvenile court—and any provisions made by a local authority under this subsection may, if the local authority think fit, include provision for giving assistance in kind, or in exceptional circumstances, in cash.'

Some difficulties arise because of the phrase 'in exceptional circumstances', though a number of authorities take the line that the payment necessary under rent guarantees is provision 'in kind', not 'in cash': the argument here being that there is no direct payment of cash to the family concerned.

347 In counties, problems may arise because of inadequate liaison between the housing authority (the district councils) and the children's authority (the county council). A county council may be very willing to give rent guarantees, but obviously cannot do so unless the district council makes an appropriate approach. Council tenants in danger of becoming seriously in arrears should be referred in good time. There is obviously greater difficulty with private tenants, simply because the statutory bodies may not know of the problem until a family is actually evicted. The Seebohm Committee underlined this problem and made three important proposals:

'The main problem arises, however, from tenants of privately owned accommodation. It might be met in three ways. First, if local authorities knew more about the private sector, negotiation and liaison might forestall some evictions, as they do now in some areas. If an advice service existed on the lines we suggest, it could accumulate a wide variety of useful information in this respect. Second, if local authorities take increased responsibility for housing the most vulnerable families, fewer of them will have to depend on the private sector. These are the families least able to make arrangements and to negotiate with private landlords. Third, the courts and rent tribunals should (as some already do) work in close collaboration with the local authorities. The court officers should be under a duty to inform the local authority as soon as they know of proceedings which might lead to eviction. More effective advice, assistance, and sometimes, prevention would then be possible.'[1]

348 In London some authorities continue to work under the former London County Council policy which stipulated that before rent guarantees could be paid:

---

[1] *Report of the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services,* Cmnd. 3703, HMSO, 1968, paragraph 407.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

(a) The family must be in arrears to the extent that eviction has been threatened or there was a serious danger that it would be proposed.
(b) It must be evident that there is no possibility of the National Assistance Board (now the Department of Health and Social Security) assisting with the rent or arrears of rent.
(c) The family must be under close supervision of a caseworker (a term now accepted as meaning, in this context, a social worker visiting regularly for the purpose of rent control).

349 We have received evidence on the difficulties to which these stipulations give rise. First, there is the shortage of social workers. Secondly, we have heard of difficulties between children's and housing departments over the collection of rent arrears, with different attitudes being taken. One witness said that a policy of avoiding evictions was difficult to follow in these circumstances:

'A family is not at risk of being homeless if a housing authority pursues a policy of non-eviction. Therefore, if it is a question for the children's department, this department would say there is no reason for them to pay the rent, because the family is not "at risk"—they are not going to be evicted'.

350 *In line with our views that local housing authorities should give greater priority to families in social need we think that much more use should be made of rent guarantees and that there should be a more liberal interpretation of Section 1(1) of the 1963 Act.* This should be recommended to local authorities by a Home Office circular, or if necessary, effected by amending legislation. *We also think that rent arrears should not automatically preclude a family from obtaining a council house:* on the contrary, many such families fall into a group described by the Seebohm Committee as 'the most vulnerable' for whom local authorities should 'take increased responsibility'.[1] But, this responsibility extends beyond a matter of housing. The problem of a family with persistent rent arrears may be solved by an adequate rent rebate scheme, but often the basic problem may be deeper and indicate the need for other social services to help the family. Above all, to quote the Seebohm Report again, 'in the last resort local authorities must face the problem of the bad payer in light of the repercussions of eviction on the children and on themselves in terms of the further high costs of any alterative'.[2]

351 We regret that we are not able to make any further recommendations on the problem of homelessness. A review of the problem will be needed in the light of the study to which we refer in paragraph 328.

---

[1] *Report of the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services,* Cmnd. 3703, HMSO, 1968, *op.cit.,* paragraph 407.

[2] *Op. cit.,* paragraph 406.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Rent guarantees

346 We were surprised how few local authorities appeared to use rent guarantees. We understand that this follows from a somewhat narrow interpretation of the relevant statutory provision. Section 1(1) of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, provides that:

'It shall be the duty of every local authority to make available such advice, guidance and assistance as may promote the welfare of children by diminishing the need to receive children into or keep them in care under the Chidlren Act 1948, the principal Act or the principal Scottish Act or to bring children before a juvenile court—and any provisions made by a local authority under this subsection may, if the local authority think fit, include provision for giving assistance in kind, or in exceptional circumstances, in cash.'

Some difficulties arise because of the phrase 'in exceptional circumstances', though a number of authorities take the line that the payment necessary under rent guarantees is provision 'in kind', not 'in cash': the argument here being that there is no direct payment of cash to the family concerned.

347 In counties, problems may arise because of inadequate liaison between the housing authority (the district councils) and the children's authority (the county council). A county council may be very willing to give rent guarantees, but obviously cannot do so unless the district council makes an appropriate approach. Council tenants in danger of becoming seriously in arrears should be referred in good time. There is obviously greater difficulty with private tenants, simply because the statutory bodies may not know of the problem until a family is actually evicted. The Seebohm Committee underlined this problem and made three important proposals:

'The main problem arises, however, from tenants of privately owned accommodation. It might be met in three ways. First, if local authorities knew more about the private sector, negotiation and liaison might forestall some evictions, as they do now in some areas. If an advice service existed on the lines we suggest, it could accumulate a wide variety of useful information in this respect. Second, if local authorities take increased responsibility for housing the most vulnerable families, fewer of them will have to depend on the private sector. These are the families least able to make arrangements and to negotiate with private landlords. Third, the courts and rent tribunals should (as some already do) work in close collaboration with the local authorities. The court officers should be under a duty to inform the local authority as soon as they know of proceedings which might lead to eviction. More effective advice, assistance, and sometimes, prevention would then be possible.'[1]

348 In London some authorities continue to work under the former London County Council policy which stipulated that before rent guarantees could be paid:

---

[1] *Report of the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services,* Cmnd. 3703, HMSO, 1968, paragraph 407.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

(a) The family must be in arrears to the extent that eviction has been threatened or there was a serious danger that it would be proposed.
(b) It must be evident that there is no possibility of the National Assistance Board (now the Department of Health and Social Security) assisting with the rent or arrears of rent.
(c) The family must be under close supervision of a caseworker (a term now accepted as meaning, in this context, a social worker visiting regularly for the purpose of rent control).

349 We have received evidence on the difficulties to which these stipulations give rise. First, there is the shortage of social workers. Secondly, we have heard of difficulties between children's and housing departments over the collection of rent arrears, with different attitudes being taken. One witness said that a policy of avoiding evictions was difficult to follow in these circumstances:

'A family is not at risk of being homeless if a housing authority pursues a policy of non-eviction. Therefore, if it is a question for the children's department, this department would say there is no reason for them to pay the rent, because the family is not "at risk"—they are not going to be evicted'.

350 *In line with our views that local housing authorities should give greater priority to families in social need we think that much more use should be made of rent guarantees and that there should be a more liberal interpretation of Section 1(1) of the 1963 Act.* This should be recommended to local authorities by a Home Office circular, or if necessary, effected by amending legislation. *We also think that rent arrears should not automatically preclude a family from obtaining a council house:* on the contrary, many such families fall into a group described by the Seebohm Committee as 'the most vulnerable' for whom local authorities should 'take increased responsibility'.[1] But, this responsibility extends beyond a matter of housing. The problem of a family with persistent rent arrears may be solved by an adequate rent rebate scheme, but often the basic problem may be deeper and indicate the need for other social services to help the family. Above all, to quote the Seebohm Report again, 'in the last resort local authorities must face the problem of the bad payer in light of the repercussions of eviction on the children and on themselves in terms of the further high costs of any alterative'.[2]

351 We regret that we are not able to make any further recommendations on the problem of homelessness. A review of the problem will be needed in the light of the study to which we refer in paragraph 328.

---

[1] *Report of the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services,* Cmnd. 3703, HMSO, 1968, *op.cit.,* paragraph 407.

[2] *Op. cit.,* paragraph 406.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Chapter 9
Housing coloured people

The need for a policy

352 Some of those who gave evidence to us urged us not to 'make an issue' of colour. It was argued that, provided local authorities follow strictly fair practices in allocation and rehousing, coloured applicants will receive the same treatment as others in like circumstances. If colour of skin were dealt with as a separate issue (so the argument continued) this would increase 'colour consciousness' and would turn a delicate situation into a major problem. This view was corroborated by the weight (but not the totality) of the evidence we received on the way in which local authorities allocated their houses without regard to religion, nationality or colour. It was further argued that if local authorities were thought to be adopting policies which appeared to give preference to coloured applicants, this would create a 'back-lash' and thereby exacerbate race relations.
353 While respecting the sincerity with which such views are held, we believe that housing management, like industrial management, cannot do its job properly in Britain today without a conscious and positive approach to race relations. Furthermore, there is undoubtedly a need for guidance to be provided for local authorities, and we think that local authorities will expect a lead from us. Should they attempt to disperse coloured families? If they do, could they be accused of discrimination under the Race Relations Act? On the other hand (to quote one of our witnesses) what weight is attached to the view that "immigrants are happier housed together in colonies so that they can pursue their own way of life without causing a nuisance or annoyance to the indigenous population who wish to continue leading their way of life". The very way in which this was expressed suggests to us that the alternative to a conscious policy is in fact a policy which is not conscious. (The witness who expressed the view given above worked for an authority who stated "no discrimination made . . . coloured families are integrated with the other tenants"). Whether there is a conscious policy or not, those who operate selection schemes have views and attitudes which must affect their decisions.
354 This underlines the need for a policy which goes beyond a

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

simple ethical statement. The whole operation of housing management is essentially discriminatory: certain applicants are selected, given a particular priority and allocated specific houses. As a result other applicants are refused, given lesser priority or denied particular houses. This is what policy is about. At the same time local authorities cannot ignore the fact that they are, on occasions, ciriticised for alleged discrimination against coloured people. We have not attempted to establish whether or not these charges can be substantiated: our job is to offer advice not to act as a court of inquiry. Whether they are true or not, the fact remains that they are part of the background against which local authorities work: they cannot be ignored or dismissed as imaginary. Local authorities are responsible elected bodies: their policies must be explicit, publicly stated and defensible, and above all demonstrably fair.

355 Furthermore, local authorities cannot ignore the debate on the desirability (or otherwise) of a policy of dispersal. A generalist 'equality of treatment' approach—even if totally carried out in practice—may lead to new concentrations of coloured people in certain areas particularly with clearance and redevelopment schemes which contain large numbers of coloured people. It is frequently stated that this leads to racial tensions. Is this so? Is it necessary that "a deliberate effort will have to be made in the interest of good race relations to achieve some spread around the different housing estates"?[1] Government (like ourselves) has had difficulty in deciding issues such as this: the situation is delicate; insufficient is known about race relations, and how they can be improved; sincere and often opposing views are held. An appeal to general principles is frequently resorted to, without adequate examination of the implications.

356 We have therefore found it necessary to discuss the issues at some length. We have not found them simple. Though we believe that our recommendations are the right ones, we have been very conscious of both the paucity of reliable evidence and of the responsibility which rests upon us.

357 A note on the layout of this chapter may be helpful. We start with a summary of the available information on the housing conditions of coloured people. We then proceed to an outline and examination of the allegations of discrimination on the part of local authorities and, much more significant, the unintended discriminatory effects of policies and practices which may have seemed justified on entirely different grounds. This is followed by a discussion of the particular problems facing coloured people in obtaining access to council housing and the ways in which local authorities can—and must—assist in the surmounting of these problems. Finally, we discuss

---

[1] *The Times,* 13.7.68.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

'coloured-commonwealth' born immigrant households are sharing compared with 22.2% of the remainder of households. In the West Midlands, where the general level of sharing is much lower, the corresponding figures are 37.0% and 4.2%. However, the Survey of Race Relations, after making adjustments mentioned above, have estimated the percentage of coloured households sharing to be 70% and 41% in the London conurbation and the West Midlands respectively.

362 At present, the bad housing conditions of so many coloured people helps to reinforce prejudice against them, and put them at a positive disadvantage in matters of health, education and employment. Typically, these bad conditions exist in the twilight areas of multiple occupation in large cities, and the slums of old industrial towns. They are shared by many more white than coloured families; but coloured households as a whole are far worse off than the average.

363 General figures are borne out by many local studies which show Commonwealth families living in the most cramped and insecure furnished lodgings; or saddled with large debts incurred through high-interest loans on old houses. Coloured immigrants have naturally concentrated in areas where their labour is required and where there is the most ready access to accommodation, albeit of a low standard. This, together with discrimination in the housing market, has barred them from many newer and more desirable areas (where houses can be obtained on more favourable terms). As a result the majority of coloured immigrants have been confined to the inner cities or seedier suburbs. Increased opportunities in both the labour market and the housing market must go hand in hand. In this the range and quality of training schemes for the present adult generation, and of education for the second generation will be crucially important. Our focus is on housing, but these wider issues with which housing is inextricably related must not be forgotten.

Housing tenure

364 In London, 36.9% of the coloured-commonwealth born immigrant households are living in furnished accommodation, compared with 7.1% for the remainder. In the West Midlands the proportions are 21.1% and 2.6% respectively. Owner-occupation among coloured immigrants is remarkably high, particularly in the West Midlands. On the other hand, in both London and the West Midlands, disproportionately few coloured immigrants are council tenants. The Survey of Race Relations figures, adjusted to coloured households again tend to show greater disparities. Nevertheless, the proportion of coloured households in council housing is increasing; by

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Table 15

Housing Tenure (1966 Sample Census)

	Owner-Occupiers		Renting from Local Authority		Renting Privately Unfurnished		Renting Privately Furnished	
	Coloured Immigrants %	English and Others %	Coloured Immigrants %	English and Others %	Coloured Immigrants %	English and Others %	Coloured Immigrants %	English and Others %
London Conurbation	35·5	39·9	5·7	23·2	21·9	29·8	36·9	7·1
West Midlands Conurbation	58·1	42·2	9·2	40·3	11·6	14·9	21·1	2·6

comparing the 1966 Census figures with those reported by Davison,[1] the Survey estimates that in a number of Inner London Boroughs the proportion of coloured persons living in council housing rose from 2% in 1961 to 6% in 1966.

365 All the authorities in our sample and all the authorities who gave evidence to us stated firmly that they made no distinction on grounds of colour. A few quotations illustrate the general situation:

"Colour of skin is wholly irrelevant".

"Coloured families are accepted on the waiting list in the same way as any other citizen. It is necessary to emphasise this and to say that this is not lip service to a theory. All immigrants really are given quite impartial treatment irrespective of colour, race or creed".

"All people are treated alike irrespective of race or colour".

In a report published by the Birmingham City Council, it is stated that:

"The Council has always insisted upon immigrant families being treated in precisely the same way as everyone else . . . Out of every 5,000 coming on to the housing waiting list, 800 are immigrants. About 250 immigrant families are housed each year from the waiting list and under the clearance programme, and this figure is increasing . . . In broad terms, at the end of the City's housing programme approximately half the citizens would be living in Council-owned properties. On current estimated figures it is probable that 10% of Council tenants will be coloured immigrants at this time".[2]

The effect of local authority policies and practices

366 As we have already stated, we have not sought to establish whether there is or is not overt and intentional discrimination against coloured people by local authorities;[3] nevertheless it is clear to us that there are undoubtedly policies and practices which have a discriminatory effect. There are three main issues here, which we term eligibility, assessment and access.

(i) Eligibility

(*a*) *Residential Qualifications*

367 Residential qualifications have the objective of discriminating in favour of established residents; they therefore discriminate against

---

[1] R. B. Davison, *Black British*. Institute of Race Relations, Oxford University Press 1966.

[2] *Report on Immigration*, Presented to the City Council, City of Birmingham General Purposes Committee, 16th July, 1968.

[3] For instance allegations are sometimes made that a local authority may discriminate against coloured people in the selection of areas for clearance and redevelopment. We have neither sought evidence on nor considered this issue. Apart from extreme difficulty of proving motivations in such cases, the matter lies outside our terms of reference.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

newcomers. To the extent that coloured people are numbered among the newcomers to an area they suffer in the same way as anyone else. In situations where coloured people figure largely among newcomers there is an apparent specific discrimination against them. It *looks* as if there is overt colour discrimination even if (as is typically the case) the residential rules are of long standing.

368 Coloured people have naturally settled in areas where their labour is required. These are also the areas where the housing shortage is the most acute and where residential rules are particularly prevalent and harsh in their effects. The coloured citizen is welcome in the labour market, but unwelcome in the housing market.

369 This is undoubtedly one of the major reasons why so few coloured families are to be found in council housing. Increasingly, however, coloured people satisfy the eligibility rules of residence and increasing numbers are now being housed from waiting lists. Several authorities produced figures demonstrating this.

(*b*) *Tenure Eligibility*

370 As we have shown earlier, some local authorities have eligibility rules which exclude certain tenure categories from the waiting list and/or from rehousing in connection with clearance. These rules are of long standing and were certainly not designed to discriminate against coloured people. But since so many coloured people are owner-occupiers, tenants of furnished properties, sub-tenants or lodgers, their position is once again worsened.

(*c*) *Household Type Eligibility*

371 Precisely the same points arise in relation to household types who are rendered ineligible. This applies particularly to the single man of working age, the unsupported mother and couples who by our moral and legal code are 'cohabiting'. There is also the problem of eligibility faced by the lone married man whose family will join him when he has obtained reasonable accommodation.

(*d*) *Multiple Ineligibility*

372 Each of these types of ineligibility affect the coloured citizen. But they do not operate in isolation. Because of the housing pressures in the areas where the majority of coloured people live and the overt discrimination which has operated in the private sector (but which is now rendered illegal by the Race Relations Act 1968) coloured people have particular difficulties. They may gain eligibility qualifications under one head only to find that they have lost it under another. A move out of lodgings or furnished rooms into an unfurnished flat may render them eligible on grounds of tenure, but, because an administrative boundary has been crossed, may also render them ineligible on grounds of residence. A qualification on residential grounds may be negatived by a move to what is legally a sub-tenancy. A move of an individual from a 'family-type' household to a single room may also mean a transfer to the ineligible single-person status.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

373 Nevertheless, though coloured people may be affected more by these problems than the uncoloured, the fact remains that they stem from the generally applicable rules which we criticise in other chapters. If the recommendations we make in those chapters are implemented, coloured people will benefit—and to the extent that they are particularly disadvantaged currently they will benefit all the more.

(ii) Assessment

374 The implementation of housing policies involves assessment of need. Some authorities interpret this simply as registering what an applicant states as his requirements and allocating a dwelling which conforms as closely as possible with these. In other areas, particularly those of large housing authorities and/or of acute housing pressure, there is a much greater emphasis on assessing the 'suitability' of applicants for particular districts and types of housing and of assessing the relative claims of different applicants for the grossly inadequate numbers of houses available.

375 We have written at length on the general problems of assessment in Chapter 3. All that we say there is relevant to coloured people. But there is more to say. The main point is that, whatever the difficulties a housing visitor faces in assessing someone from his own cultural background, these are greatly increased when the person being assessed has come from a different background.

376 Several of those who gave evidence to us underlined this problem. The Institute of Race Relations, for example, stated that:

"Because social factors may, among West Indians for example, produce 'unconventional' family patterns, bad 'marks' may follow automatically. We would point to the interview by the housing visitor—who may be ignorant of immigrant ways, baffled by immigrant accents, and generally wary of anything 'strange'—as a prime source of unequal treatment of coloured council tenants. We would urge that the training of housing visitors, should be aimed at producing someone capable of a flexible, humane response.

The effect of the present system is enhanced by the immigrants' own ignorance —for instance English families usually know that it earns bad marks not to be able to produce a rent book or account for rent arrears, and they generally know council estates by name and have some idea of where they would like to be housed. But in the case of immigrants from overseas, the interviewee's ignorance (and often apparently casual response which is due to shyness) plus the bias of the interviewer, often marks a mockery of the alleged 'preference' of coloured council tenants for old cheap housing especially acquired by the council in the area where they already live. Yet in some local authorities studied by us this was the main type of housing offered to coloured immigrants; the effect being to reinforce patterns of concentration and to disguise the fact that they had in fact been rehoused by the council.

Dispersal should not necessarily be the overriding criterion in housing coloured people; often schools, jobs and associations do make immigrants (like many local people) anxious to remain in the neighbourhood they know and this desire is a legitimate one which needs to be borne in mind and not stigmatized as an inborn

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

propensity to ghettoization. But equally it is true that immigrants are sometimes conveniently assumed to be making a 'choice' which has in fact been presented to them as the only possibility."

377 The 'choice' of area may face a coloured immigrant family with a particular difficulty since they may not know the names of council estates, and may accept a poor house or a run-down area through ignorance of the alternatives. Sometimes, no alternatives are presented to them. It may be assumed too automatically that the coloured person will in all circumstances prefer the locality he knows. Or the local authority may experience pressures or fears which lead it to house coloured people in places where their presence will not risk opposition from prejudiced white people. For this reason some local authorities have tried to avoid housing coloured people on new estates; though many others have firmly resisted pressures of this type. Furthermore, even where there is no conscious policy in relation to location, unconscious judgements or general assumptions about the wishes of coloured people may lead to disproportionate numbers being housed in less popular council estates or in acquired dwellings in run-down areas. (It is here again that some see the relationship between job opportunities and housing opportunities, and the importance of widening both).

378 This falls to be considered under the general heading of 'assessment' since it has been put to us that by excluding 'hostile' estates from the choices offered to a coloured applicant, a local authority is simply assessing the potentiality for good relationships on an estate. Nevertheless, we discuss it more thoroughly in our section on dispersal.

(iii) Access

379 By 'access' we mean not just the formal opportunities open to coloured people, but the opportunities which they know about and understand. We have already stated our firm conviction that local authorities should make positive efforts to be more open and informative. Coloured people in particular would benefit from this. Ignorance of the council house system has undoubtedly played a very large part in keeping coloured families out of the public sector, as well as putting them at a disadvantage once inside it, as many witnesses emphasised to us. This is infortunately often allied to a distrust of officialdom and a widespread belief that immigrants are discriminated against in council housing—a belief that local authorities could do more to dispel.

380 We received a number of examples of the problems experienced by particular families. We think it will be useful if we quote two of these as examples of the type of problem with which coloured people (particularly newcomers) need help.

381 The first case is given verbatim and in full from a document

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

submitted in evidence to us by a local organisation concerned with fostering good race relations.

"This man is an Indian, aged 50, who lives in one room with his wife and six children, five boys aged 16, 14, 13, 9 and 3 and one girl aged 8.
The father has lived in the borough for 4 years.

His family came earlier this year, and he applied for a council house shortly afterwards, but has met with no success, since he has an insufficient residential qualification for the active list. His extreme overcrowded conditions might have helped him on compassionate grounds, but on his application form he made two statements which have prejudiced his case:

1. Through fear of the Council's overcrowding policy, he stated that his present accommodation was three rooms, whereas in fact it is only one. There is no doubt that he did this through fear of getting his landlord into trouble and so making relationships in the house worse than they already are.
2. He gave an address for correspondence which was not his actual living address, because he did not want the landlord to intercept his letters.

When he tried to press his case and asked for a visit, officials at the Housing Department concluded that he had moved from three rooms at the address given on his application form to one room at his actual address, and that his reason for doing this was to get a better chance of a council house.

The Health Department have inspected his premises and his doctor is providing him with a certificate of housing need on health grounds. But there is no legitimate way in which the Council can re-house him unless his landlord formally evicts him. He has no rent book. The landlord is harassing him, but is unlikely to evict him formally.

A factor which adds to his present distress is the fact that he comes from a different part of India from most of the local immigrants, (and is a Roman Catholic, whereas most of them are Sikhs) and thus an important bond of social sympathy which helps to sustain many immigrants is missing; in fact his different local origin makes relationships with other Indians, and his landlord in particular, extremely difficult.

A factor which makes it difficult to help this man is that he flatly refuses to consider moving more than a few hundred yards from his present address. The Fair Housing Group of has suggested that he might well qualify for a house under the G.L.C.'s New and Expanding Town scheme. He will not consider this because he and his oldest son work locally and he regards their jobs as the family's only security. No argument will shake him on this.

We cite this case because we think it illustrates many of the fears, rational and rational, which an immigrant family may suffer; and it also illustrates the way se fears operate to make communications between such a family and the local ough Council exceptionally difficult and fraught with misunderstanding on oth sides."

382 The second case was submitted to us by the Immigrants Advisory Committee of the London Council of Social Service:

Mrs. ———— was a West Indian with two almost teenage boys, who had nearly ten years residence and an invalid husband who might be allowed home at weekends. She enquired about the possibility of rehousing as she and the two boys were sharing one room and she also required suitable accommodation for her

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

husband when he returned at weekends. She received a visit from the Public Health Inspector and she received the following letter from the Town Clerk. Later her case was raised by a Councillor and she was eventually told that she need not move. Some months later, she was in fact rehoused by the G.L.C. as part of their redevelopment scheme. This was already in the pipeline when the Borough wrote to her and her eligibility for rehousing by the G.L.C. was beyond question. Yet they did not tell her anything of this. It was only by accident that her case was taken up and she was enabled to remain where she was until she was rehoused.

The letter from the Town Clerk was as follows:[1]

Dear Madam,

Housing Act 1957—Part IV

Overcrowding

The attention of the Council has been drawn to the fact that the top floor front room at the above premises, occupied by you and your family are overcrowded, contrary to Part IV of the Housing Act 1957. Your family consists of three units, whereas the permitted number for the letting is two.

The Council as a Public Health Authority have a legal duty under the above Act to enforce the provisions in relation to overcrowding and, therefore, I am instructed to warn you that steps must be taken within 3 months from the date of this letter to see that overcrowding is abated.

Although you have registered for alternative accommodation with the Borough Council, you will appreciate that there is a very long waiting list of applicants, many of whom have urgent priorities on medical grounds. In the circumstances, there is little prospect of an offer of alternative accommodation being made to you and the Council, while fully understanding the difficulties in obtaining housing accommodation, expect you to make every endeavour to abate the overcrowding by your own efforts.

At the end of three months, your case will be reviewed again and the Council hope to learn that you have taken steps to abate the overcrowding.

Yours sincerely,

.....

Town Clerk

383 The problems of understanding the 'housing system' are difficult enough for the sophisticated. (We ourselves, who are not unfamiliar with the system, found many perplexing issues which took much unravelling and, on occasion, gave rise to conflicting interpretations from expert advisers). They may be totally incomprehensible and shrouded in mystery to a relative newcomer.

384 We were told by many of our witnesses that many coloured families refrain from applying for local authority housing because they believe that they are not entitled to do so. Some immigrants are also unsure of their position on nationality grounds. Although they are treated as British citizens from a technical point of view,

[1] We should make it clear that we have not tried to establish the full facts of this case or the justification for the action of the local authority. We are merely illustrating the impact of a system on a coloured family.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

they are conscious of the fact that they may have an Indian, Pakistani or other passport, and believe that this prohibits them from getting a council tenancy. In some cases the housing department inadvertently add to this confusion by asking whether an applicant is British or, as in one case reported to us (where an Indian who had been in Britain for many years approached them) suggesting that the applicant should apply for British naturalisation papers if he wanted to be housed by the Council. Such experiences are passed round by word of mouth and act as a deterrent to some who might otherwise apply to go on the housing list.

385 A further complication can arise in connection with the electoral roll. Many immigrants, particularly those who are forced to make frequent moves, do not get their names on the electoral register; in other cases, landlords, mindful of the activities of the Health Department, do not complete the electoral registration form with the names of all residents in their property. Clerks at the housing department often ask applicants if they are on the register before they accept the application. They do not always tell an applicant that another proof of residence—such as an insurance card—would be acceptable. The applicant, therefore, believes he is ineligible.

386 Some tenants in multiple-occupied houses are also reluctant to approach the housing department as they, quite rightly, believe that this may only lead to inspection and trouble with the landlord and not to being re-housed. Indeed, in some boroughs housing tenancy committees refer cases to the health department where an applicant is living in overcrowded or unsuitable accommodation and they have decided not to re-house him. The second case quoted above is an illustration of this type of case.

387 In order to make sure that information about and confidence in the council house system is gained by immigrants who might benefit from it, local authorities will have to try unorthodox methods of approach: for example through clubs or shops serving the immigrant communities, through liaison committees and councils of community relations, and through their own welfare organisations or local spokesmen. This is merely an extension of the methods recommended in Chapter 3 for reaching people in housing need who are not already on the housing list.

388 It is true that some Commonwealth immigrants are still likely to prefer to buy their own houses wherever possible. But they may benefit from local authority advice or finance in doing this; or they may be much better off for a few years in a council house saving to buy, than in expensive private rented accommodation. Moreover the tastes and expedients of today cannot be taken as the pattern of future preferences, especially among the new generation of coloured Britons.

389 We were struck by the experience of one authority who told us that, following the rehousing of a substantial number of coloured

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

families from a clearance area, a significant increase was observed in the number of applications for council houses from coloured people. The visible and tangible proof that coloured people were eligible for council houses destroyed widely held, mistaken views on the local authority's policy in relation to coloured people.

390 In our view all these considerations (and many similar ones we could quote) strongly support the view that a housing advice service is needed. There was unanimous agreement on this among those who gave evidence to us. A full consideration of this (and the implications which flow from it) are beyond our terms of reference, but we urge that the proposal should not be left where we have to leave it.

391 But even in the absence of such a service, local authorities—in essence, the local authority staff—need to take a positive and helpful attitude to families who are in need, but know not how to improve their situation, what services and facilities are available to them, and what rights and duties the law of this country confers on them.

A case for positive discrimination?

392 Current thinking on social policy is embracing the concept of priority areas of action. The Milner Holland Report commended the idea of designating areas of acute housing stress and bad conditions as 'areas of special control'.[1] The National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants carried thinking on this rather further and broadened the concept to 'areas of special housing need'.[2] The Plowden Committee underlined the multiple ways in which areas of poor educational provision were disadvantaged; they called for *positive discrimination* and the designation of 'educational priority areas'.[3] The Seebohm Committee (having a wider remit than the other three Committees) called for discrimination in favour of 'social development areas'.[4]

393 All these reports refer to the problems of areas containing a high concentration of immigrants, but it is significant that this is regarded as an incidental issue. Even the report of the National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants which was, of course, specifically concerned with immigrants, defined 'areas of special housing need' in terms of housing conditions, not in terms of race or colour; and they

---

[1] *Report of the Committee on Housing in Greater London*, Cmnd. 2605, HMSO, 1965, pages 122–3.

[2] *Areas of Special Housing Need*, National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants, 1967.

[3] *Children and Their Primary Schools*, Central Advisory Council for Education (England), Volume 1: Report, Chapter 5.

[4] *Report of the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services*, Cmnd, 3703, HMSO, 1968, pages 149–51.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

regarded it as self-evident that the action required was for all the residents of the area 'irrespective of their country of origin'. Nevertheless, in the discussions on these various proposals there is no doubt that coloured people have been in the forefront of people's minds. We see dangers here. It is significant that none of those giving evidence to us asked for specially favourable treatment for coloured people.

394 We think it is important to be clear on this issue. If there is, as we have repeatedly stressed in this report, a combination of circumstances which place coloured people in disadvantaged situations, is there not a case for swinging the balance by giving them specially favourable treatment? Within the framework of our inquiry this would imply priority allocation to coloured families, or special subsidies for housing coloured families, *because they are coloured.*

395 Our answer is quite definitely "No". Our reasoning is simple. Coloured families are disadvantaged (in terms of housing) for three reasons:

(1) They suffer from rules which equally place others *irrespective of colour* at a similar disadvantage. These rules, in our view, need changing. The unintentional discrimination would thereby be removed.

(2) They suffer because of a lack of information and advice—what we term 'access'—but, again, though the problems may be more difficult for coloured people they are shared in kind (if not in degree) by others. The answer is to improve the quantity and quality of advice and assistance available to all who need it.

(3) They suffer because of human prejudice. Measures taken to meet prejudice head-on may do the opposite. To give preferential treatment to coloured people *because they are coloured* may well result in a deterioration, rather than an improvement of, relationships. The model, we think, is the Race Relations Act, 1968 which is concerned to prevent 'less favourable' treatment.

396 We do not think that the proposals of previous Committees run counter to this. These proposals are concerned with *physical areas* which have a need for priority action and 'positive discrimination'. The fact that these areas may frequently contain a high proportion of coloured people is incidental to the problem.

Dispersal

397 We received seemingly conflicting evidence on the question of dispersing coloured people. We say 'seemingly', because it is quite clear that insufficient is known for unequivocal statements to be made about the *viability* of a policy of dispersal, about the forces making for concentration and dispersal, or about the long-term implications of concentration and dispersal.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

398 There are widely held views that 'concentration' is a bad thing in itself and that dispersal should be the aim of policy, that coloured people should not be compelled to disperse, and that there are strong community advantages in concentration which are well recognised by coloured people and which constitute a strong barrier to dispersal.

Concentrations of coloured people

399 There appear to be three factors which explain and justify the proposition that concentration of coloured people is undesirable. First, there is the spectre of the American ghetto, the race riots and the enormous difficulty being experienced in the United States in overcoming the complex problems associated with colour. Certainly liberal opinion has been shocked by this vicarious experience and this has given rise to a determination to ensure that a similar situation does not arise in this country. We still have time, so the argument runs; if we dally too long it may be too late.

400 It is not at all clear how relevant the American experience is to the British situation. There are significant historical, cultural, political and socio-economic differences. Yet there can be no room for complacency. On the other hand, foreign experience—like history—is extremely difficult to evaluate: it is even more difficult to assess how far 'lessons' can be imported.

401 One thing is, however, clear. There is a world of difference between a ghetto and a concentration. The distinguishing feature of a ghetto is that there is no escape for those who want to leave it: they are barred from access to 'white areas'. This we must avoid: the Race Relations Act 1968 is a notable declaration of intent. Many of our recommendations are pointed in the same direction.

402 A second factor is that of education. The Department of Education and Science are committed to a policy of preventing 'over-concentration'. In a circular to local education authorities, under the heading "spreading the children", they have this to say:

"It is inevitable that, as the proportion of immigrant children in a school or class increases, the problems will become more difficult to solve, and the chances of assimilation more remote. How far any given proportion of immigrant children can be absorbed with benefit to both sides depends on, among other things, the composition of the immigrant group and the number of immigrant children who are proficient in English; the dividing line cannot be precisely defined. Experience suggests, however, that, apart from unusual difficulties (such as a high proportion of non-English speakers), up to a fifth of immigrant children in any group fit in with reasonable ease, but that, if the proportion goes over about one third either in the school as a whole or in any one class, serious strains arise. It is therefore desirable that the catchment areas of schools should, wherever possible, be arranged to avoid undue concentrations of immigrant children. Where this proves impracticable

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

simply because the school serves an area which is occupied largely by immigrants, every effort should be made to disperse the immigrant children round a greater number of schools and to meet such problems of transport as may arise. It is important for the success of such measures that the reasons should be carefully explained beforehand to the parents of both the immigrant and the other children, and their co-operation obtained. *It will be helpful if the parents of non-immigrant children can see that practical measures have been taken to deal with the problems in the schools, and that the progress of their own children is not being restricted by the undue preoccupation of the teaching staff with linguistic and other difficulties of immigrant children.*

Occasions may arise when dispersal measures of this nature are not practicable, or seem in a particular case to involve disadvantages which outweigh the benefits. They should nevertheless be given serious consideration, since it is to everyone's disadvantage if the problems within a school are allowed to become so great that they cause a decline in the general standard of education provided."[1]

403 It is not for us to review educational policy, inseparable though it may be from some aspects of housing policy. Nevertheless, the evidence we received clearly underlined the problems which face a school with a high proportion of coloured children. Quite apart from the purely educational problems and the fear (and hence hostility) around among white parents, a 'black school' will present social handicaps for the school-leavers. This is inevitable in a society where importance attaches to where one went to school. Again we see the inter-relationships between housing, education and jobs.

404 The short-term problem may be largely educational—the problem with which the Department of Education and Science circular is concerned—but the longer-term problem is one of social status and ability to compete on the labour market. A 'black school' in a majority white society seems likely to lead to a long-term disadvantaged position for its school-leavers.

405 The third factor is simply the appalling housing and environmental conditions in many areas of concentration. But though it is a crucial problem it can be solved by redirection of housing policy—such as is provided by the new Housing Bill and the recommendations we make in this report. We certainly do not wish to underestimate the problem, but it is not a problem of colour. Given a policy of channelling resources into these disadvantaged areas, the short term problem can be tackled. This will not only improve the conditions of those—black and white—who live in these areas: it will also help to break the association between colour and bad housing. But the problem in these areas is often congestion and overcrowding. Once again, therefore, we are led to establishing the desirability of dispersal.

---

[1] Department of Education and Science Circular 7/65, *The Education of Immigrants*, June 1965.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Dispersal as the aim of policy

406 There is thus a strong case for a policy of dispersal. This was urged on us by many of those giving evidence but though we accept this we do so in the qualified way it was put forward by the Institute of Race Relations: *dispersal should be an aim, but not the overriding preoccupation of policy.* We regard this issue of such crucial importance that we paraphrase the evidence of the Institute at some length:

The evidence from The Survey of Race Relations in Britain strongly argued that there were great dangers in the continued concentration of coloured people in overcrowded housing in the poorer quarters of our cities. These dangers were thought to be greatest in the case of West Indians. There is the danger of the growth of separate communities, alienated from the majority society, and permanently disadvantaged. This is especially the case where concentrations are involuntary in the sense that the inhabitants can find no way out.

Despite these very real dangers it was argued that dispersal should not be the overriding criterion in housing coloured people. Some concentrations occur in response to the cultural needs of a community. Some immigrant groups may prefer to remain where they are to be near jobs and the schools with which their children are familiar; some may cluster together for security and may be afraid to move outward into what they fear may be a hostile environment; some may prefer to move from their present area but to be rehoused near one another. There is no prescription that can be universally applied. Different communities will have different needs at different stages of their development and there will be variations within communities. A few notes were offered by way of illustration.

Indians and Pakistanis

Because of the demographic imbalance in migration and the continued preponderance of single males and of men who have left their wives in the homeland many Pakistanis still tend to cluster in all-male settlements. They live in bachelor houses with their kin or village-fellows, grouped together by area of origin. It is unlikely that a policy of dispersal would break down the self-segregation of these men, who, like the Irish labourers before them, live co-operatively, sacrificing amenities to their economic goals.

However, many Pakistani communities, like the Indian ones before them, are changing their character very rapidly as wives join their husbands and families are re-united. This process is likely to be accelerated by the effect of the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act which requires both parents to be present before dependent children can enter.

As the Indian and Pakistani communities become well established, the families often group together by village or kinship ties. They buy property, start their own businesses, found welfare associations and in many other ways become mutually supportive. These communities are putting down roots and there is no case for an active policy of dispersal, but it is desirable that Indians and Pakistanis should not be involuntarily confined to particular areas of any town. Aspiring members are

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

already making their way into suburbia and if the housing market is not artificially restricted this process will accelerate. However, it could be arrested by hostility. On the other hand, many Indian and Pakistani families have been here only a short time and would be glad to move from an area where hostility has increased if they could be sure that another area offered the prospect of steady employment and adequate housing. They would probably be willing to co-operate in any plan to effect dispersal, but only if these conditions were satisfied.

For the Sikhs the Gurdwara (temple) provides a cultural and social centre which is indispensable in the early stages of settlement and dispersal is likely to take place to areas that are within easy reach of these centres.

West Indians

The position of West Indians is different and more complex. In some places there are communities that have established themselves and despite poor housing prefer to remain in a neighbourhood that is near their work and has a market which supplies the food they like. There are others who will not want to leave the concentration in the inner city either through fear of the unknown or because they feel threatened by the hostility they have increasingly perceived among the majority. For them and for the established communities the alternatives will ultimately be rehousing within the area of those who are displaced by redevelopment schemes or assisting property owners to rehabilitate their houses.

But a majority of West Indians who live in the underprivileged areas of our cities are not there by choice and could afford better housing if only they could get it. They often pay more rent than their white neighbours for accommodation with poorer amenities. Many West Indians are the arche type of the council house tenant; skilled artisans whose wives are prepared to go out to work to add to the family resources. If the present obstacles are removed it seems to us likely that they will follow the Irish into acceptance in the public sector. That others would willingly buy homes if credit were availalbe is shown by the extent of home ownership among West Indians which is far higher than in the English working class.

All these people need to be helped to get out of the areas in which they are so often involuntarily segregated.

It does not follow that they would choose to be dispersed in isolation from one another; nor is there any thing to be gained in isolating them from one another. If families or friends wish to stay together it should be possible to offer them rehousing in the same neighbourhood on an estate. There is equally no need for planners to reproduce the large groupings that have grown up by accident or necessity in the inner city. Among West Indians there is not the same pattern of the extended family or the village network that is found in Indian and Pakistani settlements.

The important thing is that full information should be available about the options open to them. They need to be given a choice.

407 We think that this is a very important statement of the position, and it is one with which we as a Committee agree. But, though it goes a long way in helping the formulation of a policy, it leaves unanswered the question 'what if free choice leads to a continuation of, or even an increase in, concentration?' Is this an academic

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

question? The only honest answer is that we do not know. Our dilemma is that as a country we have time to act but insufficient knowledge to determine in what way we should act, whereas in the future when we may be clearer as to how far we should press for dispersal it may be too late.

408 Our evidence and our appraisal of the evidence leads us inevitably to the conclusion that we cannot attempt compulsory dispersal in the field of housing. As the Birmingham Community Relations Committee put it, "this would involve treating people as things and would destroy the cultural and social links that exist between people of a similar background". Under present circumstances the coloured communities are able to maintain their cinemas, shops, temples and meeting places which cater for their present special needs and provide an important focus for community life. It would require a great deal of convincing and incontrovertible evidence to purposely destroy this for the sake of a theoretical appraisal of some future unknown situation.

409 We echo the words of others when we conclude that if we are to pursue policy of integration along the lines advocated by Mr. Roy Jenkins when Home Secretary, i.e. "not a flattening process of assimilation but equality of opportunity accompanied by cultural diversity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance", then we must not act in such a way as to destroy the foci for cultural diversity. We are convinced that any policy of dispersal in the field of housing must be implemented with great sensitivity, with no element of compulsion or direction, and can proceed only at the pace of the needs and wishes of the people involved. It must not be assumed that coloured people wish to disperse themselves rapidly among the white community, but at the same time neither must the opposite be assumed. The evidence we have received makes us very conscious of the fact that it is very easy for local authorities to conclude that coloured people wish to live in concentrations. Limited employment opportunity can conspire to reinforce this. Thus though the policy of dispersal must be implemented with sensitivity, it must be a *policy.*

410 We add an important qualification. Our policies must currently rest on an insecure foundation of inadequate knowledge. As a Committee we have been able to reach some interim conclusions with the aid of research carried out under the auspices of the Survey of Race Relations in Great Britain. While acclaiming the value of this we feel strongly, with the Race Relations Board, that "there is very little detailed information about local communities or about the way of life and expectations of the different immigrant groups".[1] It is essential that research in this field be continued and greatly expanded. In no

---

[1] *Report of the Race Relations Board 1967–68,* H.C. Paper 262, HMSO, 1968, paragraph 38.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

field is policy in such great need of continuous review on the basis of research.

411 It follows from our conclusions that it is not necessary for us to discuss whether compulsory dispersal would be discriminatory under the Race Relations legislation. But it may add point to what we have said if we pose some of the awful questions which would face local authorities if they were required to limit concentrations and enforce dispersal.

412 A policy of compulsory dispersal would involve defining the maximum proportion of coloured people who could live in an area. Effective controls would then be needed. A family eligible for, and desiring, a particular council house would have to be told that the 'limit' had been reached and that they would have to go to a less concentrated area. Quite apart from the human problems involved what is this if not discriminatory? Could exceptions be made on compassionate grounds? The more we pose the questions the more we think that there must be very strong evidence indeed of the importance of dispersal, before compulsion could be contemplated. *Dispersal is a laudable aim of policy, but this policy needs pursuing with full respect for the wishes of the people concerned. Dispersal of immigrant concentrations should be regarded as a desirable consequence, but not the over-riding purpose, of housing individual immigrant families on council estates. The criterion of full, informed, individual choice comes first.*

413 With the best will in the world housing managers may still face occasional dilemmas in housing coloured families. One is how far coloured families can be expected to live in neighbourhoods which manifest racial hostility. Here the available evidence suggests that it always pays to meet race prejudice on particular council estates firmly, rather than avoid arousing it. Unpleasant incidents rarely occur beyond the initial introduction of a coloured family or families. Naturally it is important to talk frankly to the family concerned about the difficulties they may encounter, and to offer them all the support possible. If they still prefer not to risk unpleasantness, it would be wrong to force them; but the first opportunity should be taken to introduce a willing coloured family rather than yield to pressure which is anyway likely to originate with only a handful of strongly prejudiced people. Persistent trouble makers can always leave.

Records

414 There was no unanimity in the evidence submitted to us on the issue of keeping records of coloured people. Some thought that the very idea was morally repugnant. Others thought that they were essential as an aid to policy. The only common characteristic was the

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

sincerity with which opposing views were held. Quite obviously serious thought had been given to the issue.

415 The main arguments against the keeping of records were that it was wrong to keep records of a factor which was totally irrelevant; that the maintenance of 'separate lists' was unnecessary and dangerous; and that separate records (even if not in themselves discriminatory) could lead to discriminatory practices, particularly at junior levels in a housing department.

416 The main arguments for the keeping of records were that without them there could be no 'constructive discrimination' and that they were necessary to show that justice was being done to the coloured citizen.

417 We think that there is much confusion of this issue. To maintain that colour is irrelevant is to treat a moral axiom as if it were a fact: what *is* can be very different from what *should be.* Colour is not irrelevant, as we have demonstrated throughout this chapter. The very fact that discrimination is so frequently unintentional strongly supports the case for keeping records. They enable a local authority to satisfy itself that it is not following policies or practices which lead to the very discrimination they wish to avoid.

418 A local authority needs to know whether coloured people are being helped as they should be, that those who should be on the housing list are, that coloured people are not being unintentionally allocated disproportionate numbers of poorer quality houses, that the maximum dispersal which is compatible with the wishes of coloured citizens is taking place.

419 All this goes further than the need to avoid charges of discrimination under the Race Relations Act 1968; but the existence of the Act is one reason why many local authorities have already decided to keep statistics showing the number of coloured people on their waiting list or housed by them.

420 The keeping of records does not imply special lists or quotas for the housing of ethnic minorities or immigrants. Even where these techniques are used effectively to help certain categories of physically or socially handicapped people, we believe it would be misleading and damaging to categorise all coloured people as a handicapped group. The only 'handicap' is imposed from outside by those white people who regard racial differences as a stigma. Housing authorities have an important part to play in ensuring that such attitudes do not remain a permanent feature of our society.

421 But for policies to succeed they must be based on adequate facts. We were, for instance, impressed by the way in which Birmingham have been able, on the basis of records and estimates, to demonstrate the problems facing coloured people in the City and to use them in the formulation of policies:

'In Birmingham immigrant families are concentrated in two main areas of roughly

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

three square miles and two square miles respectively, with the result that in January 1967, 47 of the Authority's schools had more than 30% of immigrant pupils and 14 more than 50% . . .

Coloured children represent 50% of all short-term admissions to the care of the Children's Department, and 30% of medium or long-term admissions, in any year . . . A high proportion of the time of child care officers is devoted to help to immigrant families. This is due to the health of children or of mothers suffering because of living conditions . . .

About 250 immigrant families are housed each year and under the clearance programme and this figure is increasing.

Loans from the Corporation to purchase a house are available to immigrants like everyone else. To March 1968, some 2,953 advances had been made to immigrants, mainly on the older type of property. This represents about 40% of the total number of advances made . . . Over half of the houses in multi-occupation are occupied or owned by immigrants . . .

The paramount and urgent need is to avoid continuation of the situation of immigrants being an under-privileged class whose standards are readily identified as being inferior to those of the indigenous population . . .'[1]

422 More and better records enable adequate policies to be formulated and monitored. We think that this view is reinforced by the fact that some authorities keep 'unofficial' records. These authorities felt that the keeping of records was undesirable in principle, but found the need for them in practice. Their unofficial records or 'markings' were a positive help in the allocation of accommodation and in implementing a policy of dispersal. We hope that our report will allay the doubts which are reflected in this 'unofficial' recording.

423 Our conclusion is the same as that reached by the Race Relations Board in a more general context: 'only if we know the details of the situation can we hope to tackle the problems which arise'. Adequate records are essential not merely to counter charges of discrimination and to demonstrate that justice is being done, but also as an integral part of management and policy-formulation. They also enable the larger local authorities to establish that their intended policies are in fact being implemented at every level in the administrative hierarchy. *We therefore recommend that records should be kept and used.*

424 But what sort of records are needed? Birthplace is of some—but decreasing—relevance; and in any case as we stated in the early part of this chapter it is colour which is the important issue. Logically one should therefore conclude that colour should be the factor which should be recorded. But logic is not the only consideration. There are real practical problems to be faced: how does one distinguish between the various shades of colour?

425 In considering this issue we have assumed as an act of faith that

---

[1] *Report on Immigration*, presented to the City Council, City of Birmingham, General Purposes Committee, 16th July 1968.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

records will be needed only for a limited period. We may be proved wrong in this, but we look forward to the day when policies have achieved their objective and colour is as irrelevant in practice as it is in principle. The implication is that we are concerned with a system of recording which has current operational value. *It will need review at regular intervals.*

426 The simplest concept is that of birthplace. Though, as we have already pointed out, this will become increasingly irrelevant, the fact remains that it is relevant at the present time.[1] A rather better alternative, however, might be 'country of origin'. Though both these concepts have shortcomings we think they are better than any others.

427 *Whatever concept is used, we think that it should be used openly and with full explanation.* Strict accuracy is unattainable and should not be attempted. But the shortcomings of the records are far less important than the use which is made of them. Essentially this is to establish how many coloured people are applying for council houses, how many are getting them, where they are getting them and what type and quality of house they are obtaining. The resultant statistics will raise questions which will need investigation. If only a small proportion of coloured people are applying is this because they are being excluded by unintentional barriers, or because they have insufficient knowledge of the availability of council housing, or because they do not want or need council housing? If small proportions are getting council houses is this because of rules of eligibility which require revision? Is the result of allocation policy a new concentration of coloured people in certain areas, and if so, what can be done to secure a greater dispersal?

---

[1] A survey carried out in the London Borough of Lambeth in 1966 showed that though 68% of the total coloured population had been born outside Britain, the proportion among those aged five to eleven was 49% and among those aged under five only 6%. This is an indication of how long 'birthplace' will be relevant.
The detailed survey figures were:

Birthplace of coloured Population of Lambeth, 1966

Birthplace	All Coloured People %	Coloured Children Aged:	
		5–11 %	0–4 %
Lambeth	23	37	74
Elsewhere in Greater London	7	12	17
Elsewhere in Great Britain	2	2	3
Commonwealth	64	46	4
Non-Commonwealth	4	3	2

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Are coloured people getting more than a seemingly fair share of older-type property: is this the result of unintentional management practices? In short, records are needed as a tool of management.

In conclusion

428 In conclusion, we think that our recommendations will assist in meeting the problems as we see them today, but continuous research and reappraisal is needed. Above all, we must squarely face the issues raised by a coloured minority in a white society: we must not assume that time will be the great healer.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Chapter 10
A note on the London problem

The London housing situation

429 During our consideration of the various issues on which we have reported we were constantly brought up against the special problems of London. These problems are different not merely in degree, but also in kind, from those in the rest of the country. It is common these days to hear of the 'two nations' argument with London and the South East being described as the richer of the two. Whatever general truth there is in this, we find that it has a hollow ring so far as housing in inner London is concerned. There is no doubt that the housing problem in inner London is more acute and intractable than any to be found in the remainder of the country.

430 It was the London situation in particular which forced us to qualify our recommendations on residential qualifications and rehousing obligations. At the same time it was not for us to embark on a study of the London housing situation. The complexities of this have already been demonstrated by the Milner Holland Committee.

The industrial selection scheme

431 It is with some hesitation that we go further, but we think it is incumbent on us to do more than point out the severity of the London problems. Above all we are convinced that far stronger measures need to be taken to assist families to move out of London. The Industrial Selection Scheme is designed to do this for those whose labour is required in the London ring of new and expanding towns. Though we have not studied this scheme we have had it put strongly to us that it is not having a sufficient impact on those in greatest housing need. We think that this is a matter for concern. (We understand that the scheme is under review by a group of officials of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, the Department of Employment and Productivity, and the Greater London Council.) Furthermore, we think there is scope for something much wider. The

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Greater London Council already organise a scheme for rehousing elderly people in retirement areas. This scheme should be evaluated with a view to expansion. We were also struck by the evidence given to us by the Catholic Housing Aid Society on their "Out of London Scheme". We think it worth quoting from the evidence:

'In many instances it is evident that families will never achieve decent housing conditions in London, and for this reason we run an 'Out of London' scheme. Under this scheme we help families to move to cities in other parts of the country where housing can cost as little as half the price one would have to pay for similar accommodation in the London area and, in some instances, even less, and yet where there is no shortage of work. Under the scheme C.H.A.S. helps the families find both housing and jobs.

There are two ways of assisting people in this way. One can either help them to utilise the Industrial Selection Scheme run by the G.L.C. which enables people to find work and housing in one of the new or expanding towns, or, alternatively, we run a scheme of our own, in conjunction with branches in various parts of the country, under which they are able to move to one of the older towns such as Nottingham, Manchester, York, etc. Many people who should be able to take advantage of the statutory scheme fall by the wayside for one reason or another, and it is for this reason that we find it necessary to guide them through the complexities of the scheme. Others either prefer one of the older towns, or, because of the nature of their work, find them more suitable to their needs. It is for this reason that we run our own independent scheme.'

We think that the possibilities of developing schemes of this nature on a larger scale should be examined as a matter of urgency.

leed for further studies

432 Finally, we wish to draw attention to the need for further studies of the London housing problem. The Milner Holland Committee commented on this: since then there has been a major expansion of 'research and intelligence' in London. A number of London Boroughs have commissioned several studies. For example, Camden commissioned the Centre for Urban Studies to carry out a Housing Rents Study. Lambeth commissioned Research Services Ltd. to undertake a housing occupancy survey. During the course of our inquiry the Department of Health and Social Security commissioned a study of homelessness which is to be carried out by a research team from the Birmingham Centre for Urban and Regional Studies under the direction of Professor J. Greve. Such studies are essential if adequate policies are to be formulated for dealing with the London Housing problem.

433 We must, however, make one further point, which again was made by the Milner Holland Committee. This is that the London situation is not representative. Since central government policy is

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

formulated in London, this point is of particular significance. Studies of and policies for London are not necessarily relevant for other parts of the country. Our evidence underlines this. Indeed, it is clear that it is today very misleading to talk of *the* housing problem. The present situation is characterised by a wide range of different housing problems in different areas. It is for this reason that we underline the need for more thorough local appraisals and a continuous flow of information on which policy can be based in each locality.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Chapter 11
A note on new kinds of housing provision

New lines of policy

434 At various points in our report we have been brought up against the need for new kinds of housing provision. It does not fall to us to examine this, but we feel it would be useful if, by drawing on the evidence submitted to us, we illustrated new lines of policy which should be considered further.

435 We have pointed out that privately rented accommodation is in decline: this applies to both unfurnished and furnished accommodation. Increasingly the choice is being restricted to one between owner-occupation and renting from a local authority. In this situation those who are ineligible for a mortgage or a council tenancy have an increasingly difficult problem of obtaining accommodation. The position is aggravated by the fact that the decline in the privately-rented sector is not being matched by the increases in the other sectors: small dwellings in particular were less plentiful in 1966 than they were in 1961.[1] This affects particularly the newcomer to an area, the single, the student and the newly-wed.

436 The report prepared by the London Centre for Urban Studies for the London Borough of Camden underlines the problems which can arise:

'It is largely the acute shortage of homes for small households which has promoted the "industry" of furnished lettings, and which it has made profitable. In this way, the problem of housing essential groups in the working population of inner London has been obscured rather than solved. Since nowadays such people have hardly any alternative but to find a bed-sitter, they also quite often have to move from one address in the central area to another. So the impression is created that they do not "belong". They are regarded as "marginal" men with only marginal housing needs. In fact, however, these people are part of the local economy and society. Their existence will have to be acknowledged in drawing up a local housing programme.'[2]

---

[1] See Chapter 2, Table 5.

[2] *Housing in Camden, Report on the Housing Rents Study by Centre for Urban Studies,* London Borough of Camden, 1968, page 4.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

'Municipal bed-sitters'

437 We have already proposed, in Chapter 8, that local authorities should give more attention to the needs of the single and of students. The Camden report goes further:

'One wonders whether some special provision might not be made for such sections of the Camden population—particularly for the many single people and small households who have now no alternative but to remain in cramped bed-sitters. Though they are mobile, they are not transients. Their ideal home is very often a flat in inner London. Why could there not be "municipal bed-sitters" and small flats, furnished or unfurnished, let for short tenancies? Undoubtedly, such places would meet a widespread and continuous demand. They could well be let at economic rents corresponding to the reasonable charges made, if not frequently, for comparable dwellings on the private housing market. The provision of such accommodation would therefore not produce a deficit, but rather an asset, on the Council's housing account.'[1]

Short-term tenancies

438 We think that this proposal deserves serious attention. Indeed, we think that short-term municipal tenancies may meet the needs of many for whom there is declining alternative provision and who may not wish to remain council tenants. Certainly, the mobile worker could benefit from a short-term council tenancy while he looked around at leisure for a permanent dwelling.

Scheme for newly married couples

439 We also wish to draw attention to a scheme recently introduced in the London Borough of Newham. The Council, conscious of the problems facing newly married couples, and the movement of young people out of the Borough, decided to allocate 100 one bedroomed flats, being part of the accommodation being provided in four 23-storey blocks of flats, to be used to house newly married couples with their tenancy limited to a period not exceeding four years. We were informed that "during this time the tenants would, in addition to their rent, pay a sum of at least £2 per week, which would be invested in a building society so that at the end of four years they would have a reasonable sum to enable them to buy their own home. Some 70 young couples out of the 550 who applied were granted such tenancies, but unfortunately the Ronan Point disaster temporarily brought an end to the scheme, but the Council hope that it will be resumed at a not too distant date, as there is every indication that it is

[1] *Op. cit.*, page 9.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

working out very satisfactorily and there is an enormous demand for what is, in effect, the "loan" of a Council flat for four years. From this it will be seen that each particular flat, if the process is repeated every four years, will serve many such young couples".

440 The London Borough of Newham is also examining other ways in which they can assist the local housing situation. The Housing Manager told us of a scheme to stimulate the supply of low priced houses for purchase by Council-nominated families:

'In many of the older areas of dense development there is a lack of really low priced houses becoming available for purchase, often because the Local Authority need all the available land to cope with their own housing problems, and this is the situation in Newham, but nevertheless the Council, having started the Young Married Couples scheme with the very firm hope that these young couples would buy their homes in Newham, realised that the opportunities would not be there unless the Council took a hand to stimulate the supply.

They have given much thought to this, and have agreed in principle to two pilot schemes to be worked out whereby the land will be made available to the purchasers, who will be nominated by the Council who will also endeavour to influence the mortgage position, would approve the planning, specification and cost of the houses to be erected and generally ensure that the accommodation is available on the lowest possible terms, and all this will be worked out with the Developer to ensure that the transaction, both handled and financed by him, is carried out in a manner to be approved by the Council.'

441 We are sure that Newham is not alone in trying out new ideas such as this. (Since the issues go beyond our terms of reference we neither sought nor received much relevant evidence). We do, however, commend the ideas for evaluation and for consideration by other authorities, and again underline the need for local authorities to assess the overall housing situation in their areas and to determine their policies in relation to this.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Chapter 12
Summary of conclusions and recommendations

Chapter 1: The changing context of council housing

442 Our inquiry has been restricted to only one of the major housing sectors: the one which constitutes a quarter of the total available housing and which is under the control of local housing authorities. The purpose of this sector, and the policies which should operate within it, cannot be determined except in relation to the purposes and policies of the other sectors. Though our study is intended to assist those concerned with immediate issues within the present framework, it also highlights a series of important wider issues. We were glad to note that the Ministry is undertaking a study of housing finance in both the public and private sectors. Our report may need reviewing in the light of any fundamental changes which result from this review. At the same time we hope that our report will assist in a wider review of housing policy of which the Ministry's study is a necessary part. (paragraphs 7, 8 and 9).

443 Our recommendations stem in part from the fact that important and rapid changes are taking place in both the demand for and the supply of different kinds of housing. We single out a few issues in what we term 'the changing context of council housing'. (paragraph 10).

444 The huge decline in the privately rented sector has the important implication that the alternatives to a council house facing a household wishing to rent (or unable to buy) have declined greatly. The conclusion is that local authorities must take a wider responsibility for groups of people who at one time would have been housed in the private sector. (paragraphs 11–14).

445 An examination of trends in room-occupancy rates, household sizes, dwelling sizes and space standards reveals some important facts. There has been, since 1911, a consistent trend towards smaller household sizes and a decline in the smaller and the largest dwellings. (paragraphs 15–23).

446 But the most striking statistic is that 46% of households in 1966 consisted of only one or two persons. It is this, and the large increase

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

in five-room dwellings, which accounts for much of the fall in room-occupancy rates. Though these have declined greatly (the average is now 0.57 persons per room),[1] the room-occupancy in council houses is relatively very high (0.70 persons per room). Under-occupation is discussed more fully in a later chapter, but it is noted that the basic issue is the relationship between the size distribution of households and dwellings. (paragraphs 23 and 24).

447 Fewer houses to rent, an increasing dependence upon council housing, more single-person and elderly households, a decreasing supply of large family type houses—these are some of the major changes which are affecting the context within which local authorities have to formulate and operate their housing policies. (paragraph 26).

448 Our review of current local policies convinces us that local authorities need to have a clearer, deeper and more detailed understanding of the housing situation in their areas. The development of national housing information has had a major impact on national policy-formulation. But we no longer have a single 'national' housing problem: we have a large number of local housing problems of great variety. It is therefore essential that local policies be based on a well-informed understanding of the problems of individual areas and the context in which they arise. Our first recommendation is, therefore, that local authorities should take steps to ensure that they are better informed of the housing situation of their areas. (paragraphs 27, 28 and 31).

449 After reviewing the current statutory provisions in this connection we conclude that amending legislation is needed. The responsibilities of local housing authorities should extend far beyond providing for the needs of those who are actually to be housed by them; they should be looking for hidden needs, for needs which are not being met elsewhere, and for needs which may arise in the future. (paragraph 39).

450 The size-distribution of the stock of council houses needs continuous review since if frequently fails to 'match' the demand. Still less does it match the totality of needs which ought to be met. (paragraph 42).

451 Though rent policies in themselves do not fall within our terms of reference we are concerned that rent levels may preclude lower income applicants from obtaining council houses. This is particularly so where there is no rent rebate scheme. We recommend that local authorities should ensure that tenants with low incomes or large families (or both) are not asked to pay higher rents than they can reasonably afford. We also recommend that there should be maximum publicity for rent rebate schemes, not only among existing

[1] This is on the basis of the 1966 Census definitions of rooms which, unlike previous censuses, includes kitchens not used for meals.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

council tenants, but generally. Needy families who require heavily subsidised rents may be deterred from applying for a council house if they are ignorant of the rent rebates for which they could be eligible. (paragraph 46).

Chapter 2: The objectives of allocation policies

452 The original function of council housing has now been broadened to encompass a very wide range of housing needs. We see a danger that this very breadth of approach may mean that insufficient attention is given to households who are not only in housing need but also have social and economic problems which make it difficult for them to help themselves. In our view local authorities should give particular attention to those whose incomes are low in relation to their needs. We are not suggesting that council housing should be reserved for the poor. There are social advantages in having a broad spectrum of social classes living in a community. Indeed, local authorities must have regard to total community needs, particularly in very large areas of redevelopment or new housing. Policy must be geared to ensuring that the social and community workers needed can live in the community which they serve—whether in council houses or housing of different tenures. (paragraphs 50—56 and 63).

453 We reject any suggestion that there should be greater central control over local authority housing management policies, but we recommend that the housing advisory functions of the Ministry be strengthened. We see this as an important aid in spreading good practices. We also see the need for the collection and publication of more information on such matters as housing allocations and make-up of housing lists. (paragraphs 64—70).

Chapter 3: Advice and selection

454 The first requirement of any public activity is publicity; the provision of full information on policies, priorities and procedures, on the rights and duties of all those concerned, and on the way in which further information and advice can be obtained. It follows that selection schemes should be freely available. We attach such importance to this that we recommend that local authorities should have a statutory duty to publish their methods of selection. (paragraph 75).

455 Publicity is not, however, enough: steps have to be taken to

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

ensure that information and advice reaches those who need it. In our view, local housing authorities should develop a truly local and community service which aims at assessing local needs and assisting in the meeting of them. In clearance areas even more is required. We are fully aware that this may lead to the housing advice service recommended by the Seebohm Committee. This requires fuller consideration, but lies outside our terms of reference. (paragraphs 76—78).

456 We underline the importance of the quality and training of the staff employed and express the opinion that the present position leaves much to be desired. There is a big job of training required here. We cannot enter into a discussion of this but urge that there should be a review of the training of housing visitors and housing management staff. (paragraphs 84 and 85).

457 Some local authorities go to great lengths to allocate houses which are 'suitable' for individual tenants. We have found not only considerable variation in the ways in which this is done, but also in the reasons why grading is thought to be necessary. Some authorities grade applicants according to their suitability for dwellings of different ages and standards. On a very limited scale the justification for this is that some tenants will not take care of a new house: at the extreme they may wreck it. It would not be sound policy to allocate a high standard house to such an 'unsatisfactory tenant'. But such families are very few in number, though they pose problems for the local authority out of all proportion to their numbers. It is a far cry from allocating specially selected houses to unsatisfactory tenants to grading all tenants according to their 'fitness' for particular types of houses. (paragraphs 88 and 90).

458 Part of our concern here stems from the feeling that there is a danger that applicants are graded according to an interpretation of their desert. This even extends, on occasion, to a rejection of some from the council house sector. We were surprised to find a number of housing authorities who took up a moralistic attitude towards applicants; the underlying philosophy seemed to be that council tenancies were to be given only to those who 'deserved' them. Thus unmarried mothers, cohabitees, 'dirty' families and transients tended to be grouped as 'undesirable'. Moral rectitude, social conformity, clean living and a 'clean' rent book sometimes seemed to be essential qualifications for eligibility—at least for new houses. (paragraph 96).

459 In our view there are two essential purposes of the home visit. First, it provides an opportunity to discuss with an applicant their current housing situation, their wishes, the alternatives likely to be open to them and the implications of different choices. Where the housing visitor feels that the applicant has serious problems which require the assistance of the social work department he should make contact with that department to ensure that such help as is needed

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

is forthcoming. Secondly, the home visit is necessary as a means of checking that the information given by an applicant is accurate, and also to obtain additional information to enable the appropriate priority to be given to the application. (paragraph 100).

460 Visits should be made only by appointment and should be preceded by a letter explaining its purpose and the types of issue to be discussed. It is essential that the visitor is in a position to give accurate information on the availability of accommodation, on rent levels and rebate schemes and, above all, on the likely date of rehousing. (paragraphs 101 and 102).

461 We are critical of the ability of housing departments to deal adequately with the minority of applicants who have exceptional social problems. In our view the needs of such families should be assessed by the health and social work departments. (paragraph 106)

462 Applicants whose health is such that they should have priority in the allocation of council houses should be considered outside the normal selection procedures. Urgent cases should be eligible for immediate rehousing; others should be given an appropriate 'weighting' in the selection scheme. Quotas for the health and social work departments should not be subject to an arbitrary limit. We support the Seebohm Committee's view on the value of close liaison between the housing and the social work departments. Similarly close liaison between the local general practitioners and the social work departments is preferable to a system of doctors' certificates. (paragraphs 108, 112 and 113).

463 Most families rehoused on grounds of ill-health will probably require normal type dwellings, but a few will need specially designed accommodation. We think that there should be advance provision of dwellings incorporating special design features commonly required by the physically handicapped. (paragraphs 114 and 115).

464 Our major plea is for more weight to be given to social need. In our view the assessment of need should take into account both housing conditions and the ability of individual households to cope with the conditions. The highest priority for council housing should go to those households in bad conditions with which they are unable to cope and where the potential ability to improve the situation themselves is low. Households in bad conditions, but able to help themselves can be allocated council housing in turn or helped and advised on how to help themselves if there is likely to be a long wait for council housing due to local shortage. (paragraphs 117 and 118)

465 The selection of individual tenants for council houses should in general be undertaken by officers, not by elected members. It is the function of the members to formulate the policy framework within which selection is to operate and to ensure that it is properly implemented. This policy should be clearly set out, (e.g. in a points scheme) and published. (paragraphs 119 and 122).

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

466 No one system of selection is appropriate generally. We stress the importance of social need and its assessment by the appropriate (non-housing) department. Like cases of severe ill-health, eviction, homelessness and so forth, this should be dealt with as a priority outside the main selection scheme. 'Merit' schemes suffer the fundamental drawbacks that they cannot be published and that consistency and impartiality must always be in doubt. On the other hand, points schemes can measure only objective factors which are capable of 'pointing'. Date-order schemes have many advantages in areas where there is no real housing problem but individual hardship cases and key workers must be dealt with separately. Whatever scheme is used it must be published and be readily available. It should also be as simple as possible and subject to regular review in the light of changing housing conditions. (paragraphs 126, 130, 134, 136 and 137).

Chapter 4: Residential qualifications

467 Few issues give rise to such controversy as the 'residential qualifications' required by local authorities before an applicant can be accepted on the housing list or considered for rehousing. Reports of previous Housing Management Sub-Committees have been unanimous in condemning these on the ground that they conflict with the principle of allocating council houses on the basis of housing need. (paragraph 138).

468 Following a review of the situation and the various ways in which residential rules are operated we conclude that there should be no barrier to acceptance on a housing list. We regard this of importance both in relation to the rights of applicants and the need of local authorities to have as full information as possible on the demand for council housing in their area. We therefore recommend that there should be no residential qualification for admission to a housing list. Indeed, we go further and hold it to be fundamental that no one should be precluded from applying for, or being considered for, a council tenancy on any ground whatsoever. Only if all applications are admitted is it possible to assess needs. We think that this rule should be made a statutory obligation. (paragraph 169).

469 Our other specific recommendations on residential qualifications are:

(i) Specific periods of residence before rehousing are undesirable in principle and are justifiable only in the few areas with extreme housing pressures.

(ii) Where a specific period of residence before rehousing is unavoidable, it should be reviewed regularly, with a view to progressive reduction.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

(iii) Even where there is (unavoidably) such a residence qualification, local authorities should consider cases of special hardship.

(iv) Points for length of residence (as distinct from length of housing need) are undesirable except for purposes of differentiating between cases of equal housing need.

(v) Points for length of time in housing need constitute a reasonable method of attempting to measure hardship and priority for rehousing.

(vi) Selection of tenants in date order of application may be reasonable in areas with little housing need, but even here there should be machinery for the review of real cases of hardship. We cannot accept the justification for a date-order system in areas of housing pressure.

(vii) Key workers should be considered outside the normal selection scheme. (paragraph 170).

Chapter 5: Exchanges and transfers

470 Much of the debate on exchanges and transfers is preoccupied with the issue of underoccupation. We think this is wrong. The objectives of policy should be to provide a good 'balance' of house types in each area, to provide the space standards to which tenants aspire to provide for the maximum freedom of choice and to facilitate mobility. (paragraph 177).

471 More information is needed on the movement, and the desire for movement, by council tenants. This is required as an essential tool of management in relation to both existing dwellings and new building. (paragraph 178).

472 It has been suggested that there is a need for a national exchange bureau. In the time available to us to complete our report, we have not been able to examine this proposal in any depth. It does appear, however, to attract considerable scepticism from local authorities. Nevertheless we think that the proposal merits detailed consideration. Considerably more support was evident for regional (or sub-regional) bureaux. Here the model and experience of the London Mutual Exchange Bureau is of particular help. A note on this is given in Appendix 6. (paragraphs 182–184).

473 The London Government Act 1963 (Section 22(5)) requires the Greater London Council to 'establish and maintain facilities for the exchange of housing accommodation in Greater London for other housing accommodation, whether in or outside Greater London, between persons requiring such an exchange, and, notwithstanding anything in the Accommodation Agencies Act 1953, may require the payment of a charge by any person making use of those facilities'.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

No similar provisions apply elsewhere, though we think that they should be considered for any legislation following the Report of the Royal Commission on Local Government in England. (paragraphs 185–189).

474 We do not view underoccupation as a 'problem', but since a great deal of argument centres on it we have felt it necessary to discuss it at some length. Our conclusion is that the real problem is that of providing a good balance of houses types in each locality and assisting the movement of those who are occupying dwellings of a size which they themselves consider to be too large. A comparatively good use of space has been achieved in the council house sector. A sensible and sensitive policy of facilitating movement to smaller dwellings should be continued. Disturbance and removal allowances can assist this, but the major issue is that of providing the right size of dwelling in the right places. (paragraph 200).

475 In this connection some local authorities may need to review their policy on redecorating vacated dwellings. (paragraphs 202–204).

476 We refer to some of the problems of transfers of tenancy on the death of a tenant and in cases of desertion, separation or divorce. We have not been able to investigate the issues at all thoroughly and think there is a need for further consideration of the issues. Our preliminary view is that the position of council tenants should be neither more nor less favourable than that of private tenants. (paragraphs 205–209).

Chapter 6: Housing and labour mobility

477 We review the widely different problems facing different areas and conclude that principles can be proposed only in the broadest terms. We endorse the advice given in Ministry of Housing and Local Government Circular 2/67[1] which requested local authorities to accept applications from incoming workers. Those with no previous associations with an area have increased difficulties in solving their housing problems without assistance. This points to the need for some form of housing advice service. (paragraphs 215, 216 and 219).

478 We deprecate the practice of tying council houses to particular firms. In assessing the housing needs of their areas local authorities should have regard to the needs of industry. If workers are needed for the economy of an area the local authority have a responsibility to ensure that adequate housing is provided. To make conditions is a denial of this responsibility. If workers need council houses ordinary tenancies should be offered. (paragraphs 220–222).

479 Tied (non-council) housing has obvious advantages for some

---

[1] Welsh Office Circular No. 6/67.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

employments, for example, prison staff, policemen and agricultural workers. But there are some considerable disadvantages and we think there is a broad field here which requires review. (paragraph 223).

480 Most local authorities deal sympathetically and fairly with applications from retiring tenants of tied houses and with ex-servicemen. We think that local authorities should try to be specially helpful in cases where a servicemen has 'lost' all his roots and is looking for both a job and a house. (paragraph 226).

481 The needs of 'professional key-workers' must not be forgotten. A healthy community should provide opportunities for teachers, doctors and community and social workers to live in the area which they serve. Some of these needs may be better met by the private sectors, but the responsibility for ensuring that they are met lies with local authorities. (paragraph 227).

Chapter 7: Rehousing obligations

482 Following a review of the statutory framework and of current practice we make a number of recommendations which should be implemented in relation to the rehousing of people displaced by *any* public action. (paragraphs 228–245).

483 We think that the principle should be firmly established that the rehousing obligations of local authorities should extend to *all* households and parts of households (irrespective of size or tenure). This principle should apply irrespective of the reasons for the displacement or the statutory powers used. (paragraph 246).

484 Nevertheless, within the wider approach we are recommending local authorities to adopt, we do not think that the obligation should necessarily be to provide a council house. A household may prefer to purchase a house or rent from a private landlord or a housing association or society. All choices ought to be open, and local authorities should assist displaced households to obtain their individual choices. In short, the obligation of local authorities should be to ensure that displaced persons are satisfactorily rehoused. Rehousing by local authorities should be one of the choices, but not the only one. At the same time, it is not enough merely for a local authority to be satisfied that 'alternative accommodation exists': they should be required to ensure that all persons displaced are in fact satisfactorily rehoused. (paragraph 247).

485 This will require amending legislation. We therefore recommend that local authorities should be required by statute to ensure that every person displaced by public action is satisfactorily rehoused. This recommendation is in harmony with the considerable evidence

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

we received that clarification and standardisation of rehousing obligations was desirable. We wish to make it clear that the rehousing obligations should extend to all household types and all tenure groups. (paragraph 248).

486 The 'operative date' to which this obligation should relate is not easy to determine. In areas of severe housing pressure, if too generous an approach were adopted, local authorities might find it impossible to cope with the influx of families into an area prior to demolition. Yet these are the very areas where there tend to be long delays in the confirmation of Orders. Some authorities—Birmingham in particular —are relieved of it by their practice of purchasing large areas well in advance of clearance. The houses are thus under their control and no problems of 'influx' or 'queue-jumping' are experienced. We recommend that this policy should be followed whenever practicable. (paragraphs 249–252).

487 We were impressed by the policy of one large authority who told us that they follow as a broad rule that they will accept full responsibility for rehousing any person of family living in an area for at least one year before clearance begins. We commend this principle to all local authorities. We do not, however, think that it would be practicable to make this a statutory requirement. Nevertheless, we do think that a definite 'date-obligation' is required and that this should be later than the date of the council resolution. At this stage clearance is still only a proposal: until a compulsory purchase order has been confirmed the proposal has no statutory effect. In our judgement the rehousing obligations (redefined as above) of local authorities should operate from the date on which the relevant Order becomes operative. We have no doubt that this is right as a general principle. Nevertheless, we are aware that in London (and there may be similar areas elsewhere) this principle is unworkable; the local authorities would be quite unable to cope with the influx of people that could be expected. (paragraphs 254 and 255).

488 We are extremely concerned about this. Our worries are increased by the evidence which we received to the effect that those being rehoused from clearance and redevelopment areas 'are frequently rehoused from considerably better conditions than those left on the general waiting list'. We cannot, however, consider the wider issues involved within our remit. But it is clear that exceptions to our general principle will have to be made for a small number of authorities in areas of severe housing pressure. We therefore recommend that the Minister of Housing and Local Government should have discretion to substitute an earlier date for the operation of rehousing obligations where it is impracticable for the date to be that on which the relevant order becomes operative. This power should be used only in exceptional circumstances and should be revoked as soon as possible. Furthermore, it should be modified

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

(in line with current practice) in cases of hardship, particularly when clearance does not take place until some time after the submission of the Order. (paragraphs 256–268).

489 There is a need for intensive publicity in clearance areas. This will be even greater in areas to which the proposed Ministerial dispensation applies. (paragrpah 259).

490 Some councils take the view that, if they give an owner-occupier a tenancy and the benefit of a subsidised rent, this has a value and they ought not to have to pay him as much for his existing house as its full value in the market with vacant possession. This practice is often justified on the grounds that the council, in fact, are not acquiring the house with vacant possession, but occupied by a 'sitting' owner. (paragraphs 263–268).

491 In our view, it is wrong for an acquiring authority to seek to persuade a dispossessed owner to accept less than his full statutory entitlement to compensation, even if an agreement to accept such a reduced amount could not be upset in a court of law. Compensation and rehousing are quite separate issues. Local authorities have no power to reduce compensation, but they do have discretion in determining whether to rehouse a dispossessed owner-occupier. Their discretion should not be used to affect the former. Indeed, it is clear that if the spirit, as distinct from the letter, of the law were observed an owner-occupier who could not obtain alternative accommodation could not be refused a council tenancy on the ground that he was unwilling to accept a reduction in the compensation for his existing house. (paragraph 271).

492 We think that this is a matter which requires an amendment of the law. We recommend that legislation be passed to prohibit the abatement of compensation for owner-occupied dwellings where the occupier is rehoused by a local authority. We feel equally strongly that the (fortunately uncommon) practice of charging a higher rent to an owner-occupier who has received market value compensation for his house is quite intolerable. We do not think that a legislative provision is appropriate to deal with this, but recommend that the local authorities concerned should consider the general arguments we put forward in this section and the views which we have expressed. Where a rehoused owner-occupier is charged a higher rent on the basis of his income the matter is, of course, quite different. (paragraph 273).

493 We urge a wider use of the powers to contribute towards the cost of removal expenses of these displaced by clearance or redevelopment. There is no mention of 'hardship' in the legislation and, in our view, this is not the criterion on which payments should be made. A person displaced by public action should have a right to a payment, though the level of this payment is best left to the discretion of local authorities. (paragraphs 274 and 275).

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

The Large Family

494 There is a danger that the needs of large families will be overlooked in the preoccupation with the huge need for small dwellings. Insufficient provision of dwellings with four or more bedrooms is being made. We recommend that local authorities should assess carefully the need for larger dwellings and should ensure that these are provided at rents within the rent paying ability of the families for whom they are intended. (paragraphs 277–283).

The Elderly

495 The number of elderly households is increasing rapidly and they now constitute over a quarter of the total. The provision which is being made is very inadequate. However, one must beware of speaking of the 8¾ million elderly people as if they were a homogenerous group, still less a problem group. (paragraphs 286–289).

496 More two-bedroom houses should be allocated to elderly people who wish to have a 'spare' bedroom, to elderly couples who would welcome bedroom-separation or may even need it on health grounds, and to non-married elderly households. (paragraph 292).

497 Some elderly people wish to move to another area on retirement, on bereavement, or after an incapacitating illness. If our general ecommendation in Chapter 4 is accepted, elderly people wishing to nove to a new area will be able to register an application for a :ouncil house without fulfilling a residential qualification. This will :nable an elderly person's application to be assessed and due iority to be given to it. Only in this way is it possible to assess the lative claims of different applicants. (paragraph 296).

98 Elderly owner-occupiers who wish to move to a small council .welling should not be debarred because of their tenure. We have already stated that we hold it to be a general principle that no one should be precluded from applying for, or being considered for, a council tenancy on any ground whatsoever. The time to judge an application is after it has been considered, not before. The same applies to questions of income. (paragraphs 301–305).

499 Though we have already discussed 'underoccupation' at length, we make reference here to the practice followed by a small number of authorities (which we deprecate) of reserving all their one-bedroom dwellings for elderly council tenants transferring from underoccupied houses. This has the effect of totally precluding elderly people in the private sectors (whose housing situation may be far worse) from consideration. (paragraph 308).

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

The Single

500 Of the 2.4 million one-person households, 860,000 are under pensionable age: this is an increase of about a fifth in the five years since 1961. The supply of accommodation 'traditionally' occupied by single people is declining. At the same time more young people are taking jobs away from their home districts and the higher the level of education, the higher the rate of movement. (paragraphs 309–311).

501 In our view local authorities ought to give attention to the needs of the single and accept a responsibility for ensuring that their needs are adequately met. This does not mean that local authorities themselves should necessarily provide more dwellings for single people. Much more could be done through other agenceis such as housing associations and societies. However, in the present situation it may be that in certain areas direct provision by local authorities may be the only way of meeting the needs. (paragraph 316).

Students

502 Much of what we say on single people applies to students and apprentices, but their problems warrant special attention. There is a particular problem with married students, who fall between the two stools of 'housing' and 'education'. We recommend that a review should be undertaken of the housing of students. We do not feel that we should define this more clearly, but we are clear that it should be supported jointly by the Department of Education and Science and the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. In the meantime, local authorities should have regard to the needs of students and assist in the provision of suitable accommodation, particularly for married postgraduates, who should be eligible for the allocation of council houses. (paragraphs 318–327).

The Homeless

503 Homelessness is a subject on which far more is said than known. Definitions employed by housing authorities vary widely. (paragraphs 328 and 329).

504 We review the arguments for and against local authorities requiring court orders before they will rehouse a family faced with eviction. In our view local authorities are right in treating each case on its merits and in frequently insisting on court proceedings. The rule should be to assess each case carefully and, where the local authority are satisfied that a tenant will be evicted, not to insist on court proceedings. (paragraphs 339–341).

505 In our discussion of rent arrears we stress the value of rent guarantees. Section 1(1) of the Children and Young Persons Act

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

1963 is subject to narrow interpretation and may need amendment. (paragraph 346).

506 The problem of the family with persistent rent arrears may be solved by an adequate rent rebate scheme, but often the basic problem may be deeper and indicate the need for other social services to help the family. (paragraph 350).

Chapter 9: Housing coloured people

507 We devote a considerable portion of our report to the question of housing coloured people, despite a significant body of evidence which urged us not to 'make an issue' of colour. Our reasons for this are twofold. First, we believe that housing management, like industrial management, cannot do its job properly in Britain today without a conscious and positive approach to race relations. Secondly, there is undoubtedly a need for guidance to be provided for local authorities, and we think that local authorities will expect a lead from us. We have not found the issues simple. Though we believe that our recommendations are the right ones, we have been very conscious of both the paucity of reliable evidence and of the responsibility which rests upon us. (paragraphs 352–356).

508 We stress that we are not a court of inquiry. Though charges of discrimination have been made against local authorities we have not sought to establish whether or not they can be justified. Nevertheless, it is clear that there are policies and practices which have a discriminatory effect. Coloured people, being largely newcomers, are affected by residential qualifications. Again, because newcomers tend to take furnished accommodation they are particularly affected by an interpretation of rehousing obligations which exclude those in furnished tenancies. These, and similar, generally applicable rules have the effect (though not the purpose) of discriminating against coloured immigrants. (paragraphs 366–373).

509 Coloured immigrants, like any group from cultural backgrounds which are 'strange' to housing visitors, may also tend to be unfavourably treated. This stems from the practice of assessing applicants according to their housekeeping standards: a practice of which we are severely critical. (paragraphs 374–378).

510 Coloured people will also tend to be ignorant of the 'council house system'. They may find it incomprehensible and shrouded in mystery. We spell this out in some detail. To our minds it underlines the need for better publicity, for better public relations and for a housing advice service. (paragraphs 379–391).

511 In all these matters we see coloured people benefiting from reforms and improvements we recommend on general grounds. We do, however, discuss the case for a policy of positive discrimina-

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

tion. This we reject. It is appropriate for *areas* of concentrated need, but not for particular groups of people. (paragraphs 392–396).

512 We discuss the issue of dispersal at length, and underline its desirability as an aim of policy. But we are clear that it cannot and should not be the overriding preoccupation of policy. We are convinced that any policy of dispersal in the field of housing must be implemented with great sensitivity, with no element of compulsion or direction, and can proceed only at the pace of the needs and wishes of the people involved. It must not be assumed that coloured people wish to disperse themselves rapidly among the white community, but at the same time the opposite must not be assumed. The evidence we have received makes us very conscious of the fact that it is very easy for local authorities to conclude that coloured people wish to live in concentrations. Limited employment opportunities can conspire to reinforce this. Thus though the policy of dispersal must be implemented with sensitivity, it must be a *policy*. (paragraphs 397–413).

513 The issue of whether or not local authorities should maintain records of coloured people was the most difficult one which we had to decide. We were reluctantly but quite definitely led to the conclusion that records were necessary. We think that there is much confusion of this issue. To maintain that colour is irrelevant is to treat a moral axiom as if it were a fact: what is can be very different from what *should be*. Colour is not irrelevant, as we have demonstrated throughout this chapter. The very fact that discrimination is so frequently unintentional strongly supports the case for keeping records. They enable a local authority to satisfy itself that it is not following policies or practices which lead to the very discrimination they wish to avoid. But this is not the only reason for keeping records: a local authority needs to know whether coloured people are being helped as they should be, that those who should be on the housing list are, that coloured people are not unintentionally being allocated disproportionate numbers of poorer-quality houses, that maximum dispersal which is compatible with the wishes of coloured citizens is taking place. All this goes further than the need to avoid charges of discrimination under the Race Relations Act 1968; but the existence of the Act is one reason why many local authorities have already decided to keep statistics showing the number of coloured people on their waiting list or housed by them. (paragraphs 414–419).

514 The keeping of records does not imply special lists or quotas for the housing of ethnic minorities or immigrants. Even where these techniques are used effectively to help certain categories of physically or socially handicapped people, we believe it would be misleading and damaging to categorise all coloured people as a handicapped group. The only 'handicap' is imposed from outside by those white people who regard racial difference as a stigma. Housing authorities

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

have an important part to play in ensuring that such attitudes do not remain a permanent feature of our society. (paragraph 420).

515 In considering this issue we have assumed as an act of faith that records will be needed only for a limited period. We may be proved wrong in this, but we look forward to the day when policies have achieved their objective, and colour is irrelevant in practice as it is in principle. The implication is that we are concerned with a system of recording which has current operational value. It will need review at regular intervals. (paragraph 425).

516 The simplest concept is that of birthplace. Though, this will become increasingly irrelevant the fact remains that it is relevant at the present time. A rather better alternative, however, might be 'country of origin'. Though both these concepts have shortcomings we think they are better than any others. Whatever concept is used, we think it should be used openly and with full explanation. (paragraphs 426 and 427).

Chapter 10: A note on the London problem

517 The housing problems in London are different not merely in degree, but also in kind, from those in the rest of the country. It was the London situation in particular which forced us to qualify our recommendations on residential qualifications and rehousing obligations. It is not for us to embark on a new study of the London housing situation, but we felt it necessary to record our view that far stronger measures need to be taken to assist families to move out of London. We have received evidence which is critical of the present Industrial Selection Scheme which is designed to do this for those whose labour is required in the London ring of new and expanding towns, and we think that this is a matter for concern. We understand that the scheme is at present under review. We refer to the 'Out of London Scheme' organised by the Catholic Housing Aid Society. We think that the possibility of developing schemes of this type on a larger scale should be examined as a matter of urgency. (paragraphs 429–431).

Chapter 11: A note on new kinds of housing provision

518 In our final main chapter we make reference to a number of proposals for new kinds of housing provision which were submitted to us in evidence. These go beyond our terms of reference but we felt that they were worth commending to local authorities for further consideration. (paragraphs 434–441).

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Acknowledgements

519 We conclude by expressing our sincere appreciation of the invaluable services and support of our Assessors, Mr. A. MacC. Armstrong and Dr. W. V. Hole, and of the Secretariat, Mr. D. Fox, Mr. C. P. Taylor and Mr. P. E. Bellamy. Like members of the Sub-Committee they have worked under great pressure. They rendered our difficult task manageable and made it possible for us to complete our work in a very short space of time. We should also like to record our appreciation of the work carried out by Miss J. Everett and Miss V. A. Karn of the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies at Birmingham University in analysing the replies to the questionnaire sent to local authorities and to the assistance given to us by Miss Karn in this connection at our meetings.

J. B. Cullingworth (*Chairman*)
Harry Brummitt
J. L. Burn
Pauline Crabbe
I. Bowen Griffith
W. R. B. Johannes
Adrian M. Kelly
Elizabeth Parker
John Ruscoe
M. Ruth Schofield
Julius Silverman
H. G. Simpson

A. Mac C. Armstrong (*Assessor*)
W. Vere Hole (*Assessor*)
Derek Fox (*Joint Secretary*)
C. P. Taylor (*Joint Secretary*)
P. E. Bellamy (*Assistant Secretary*)

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Appendix 1
List of organisations and individuals who gave evidence

Local Authorities

Greater London Council

County Borough Councils:

Birmingham† (Oral evidence given by J. J. Atkinson, Esq.)
Bradford
Brighton
Bristol
Cardiff† (Oral evidence given by W. M. Brook, Esq.)
Chester
Dewsbury
Leicester
Liverpool
Newcastle-upon-Tyne† (Oral evidence given by P. J. Dixon, Esq.)
Norwich
Plymouth
Portsmouth
Sheffield
Southend-on-Sea
South Shields
Stoke-on-Trent
Sunderland
Swansea
Warley
Wolverhampton† (Oral evidence given by M. C. Barton, Esq.)

London Borough Councils:

Brent
Croydon
Lambeth
Newham

Municipal Borough Councils:

Berwick-upon-Tweed
Bridgewater
Castleford
Chesterfield

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Pudsey
Rochester
Whitehaven
Widnes
Winchester

Urban District Councils:

Bedwellty
Caerphilly
Corby
Horsforth
Leatherhead
Leighton-Linslade
Shildon
Worsley

Rural District Councils

Doncaster
Penybont
Rotherham
St. Faith's and Aylsham
Seisdon

Local Authority Associations

County Councils Association
National Association of Parish Councils
Rural District Councils Association
Urban District Councils Association

Government Departments

Board of Trade
Department of Education and Science
Department of Employment and Productivity
Department of Health and Social Security
Home Office
Ministry of Defence

Other organisations

Association of Children's Officers
Association of London Borough Housing Managers†
(Oral evidence given by D. R. Perry, Esq., and C. Rowley, Esq.)
Association of London Housing Estates
Birmingham Community Relations Committee (formerly Birmingham Liaison Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants)
Bradford Consultative Council for Commonwealth Citizens
Brent Council of Social Service
British Churches Housing Trust
British Legion
British Medical Association
Cambridge House

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Catholic Housing Aid Society†
(Oral evidence given by Father E. Casey)
Central Council for the Disabled including the Disabled Living Activities Group
Centre for Urban Studies, University College, London
Chartered Land Societies Committee
Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom
Community Relations Commission (formerly National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants)
Confederation of British Industry
County Welfare Officers' Society
Crawley Council of Social Service
Daily and Sunday Mirror Readers' Service
Ealing International Friendship Council
Economic Planning Council, East Anglia Region
Economic Planning Council, East Midlands Region
Economic Planning Council, Northern Region
Economic Planning Council, North Western Region
Economic Planning Council, South East Region
Economic Planning Council, South West Region
Economic Planning Council, West Midlands Region
Economic Planning Council, Yorkshire and Humberside Region
Family Service Units
Gloucester Council for Community Relations
Greater London Conference on Old People's Welfare
Hackney Community Relations Council
Hammersmith Local Government Committee of the Labour Party
Hatfield Council of Social Service
Health Visitors' Association
Housing Centre Trust
Institute of Housing Managers†
(Oral evidence given by S. I. Benson, Esq., A. C. Gittins, Esq., H. Key, Esq., and J. P. Macey, Esq.)
Institute of Personnel Management
Institute of Race Relations
Institute of Welfare Officers
Kensington Housing Trust
London Council of Social Service†
(Oral evidence given by Mrs. P. M. Dines and J. Hunte, Esq.)
London District Committee of the Communist Party
Montague Tibbles Tenants' Association
National Association of Probation Officers
National Coal Board
National Council for the Unmarried Mother and Her Child
National Old People's Welfare Council
National Housing and Town Planning Council
Oxford Committee for Racial Integration
Pudsey Council of Social Service
Queen Elizabeth's Foundation for the Disabled
Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Salvation Army
Society of Medical Officers of Health
Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association
South Birmingham Housing Advice Bureau
South Bucks and Berks Housing Consortium
South West Essex Housing Managers' Group
Standing Working Party on London Housing
Surrey Housing Officers Association
Survey of Race Relations in Great Britain†
(Oral evidence given by N. Deakin, Esq., M. Lyon, Esq. and E. J. B. Rose, Esq.)
Trades Union Congress
Volkshuisvesting, Rotterdam
Wandsworth Council for Community Relations
W. E. Forster Housing Association Limited
Westminster Overseas Committee of the Westminster Council of Social Service
Woking Council of Social Service
Wycombe and District Integration Committee
Yorkshire Council of Social Service

Individuals

L. Bloom, Esq.
Dr. D. G. Bull
The Hon. M. Bonham Carter†
E. P. Davies, Esq.
Professor D. V. Donnison
J. H. Eaton, Esq.
A. C. Gittins, Esq.
Mrs. A. Harvey†
F. R. G. Hester, Esq.
J. Lyttle, Esq.†
R. S. Moore, Esq.
Dr. R. A. Parker
Professor J. A. Rex
T. J. Sibley, Esq.
Miss G. Sumner
J. Thirlwell, Esq.
Miss C. Ungerson
The Rev. W. Wood†

---

†Organisations and individuals from whom oral evidence was received.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Appendix 2
The sample of local authorities

1 At the beginning of our inquiry we prepared a questionnaire to be sent to a sample of local authorities. In the main this was designed to ascertain current practices in relation to the allocation of council houses.

2 The sample was required to be representative rather than random. A uniform sample from all housing authorities would have included only a small proportion of those with large stocks of dwellings but a large number of relatively small authorities. Therefore samples were drawn separately from groups of councils classified according to the number of their dwellings to ensure that those with the greatest number were well represented, while a reasonable number of smaller authorities was also included. A sample of 110 authorities was drawn on the following basis:

	England		Wales	
No. of Council Houses	Sample Fraction	No. of Local Authorities in Sample	Sample Fraction	No. of Local Authorities in Sample
More than 20,000	All	26	All	1
10,000–20,000	1/2	18	1/2	1
4,000–10,000	1/6	20	1/3	2
2,000–4,000	1/14	15	1/6	3
Less than 2,000	1/40	21	1/47	3
		100		10

3 Additional to this main sample, a number of other authorities were sent the questionnaire. These were all authorities in and around the West Midlands conurbation who were not in the main sample, chosen to enable us to build up a comprehensive picture of allocation policy within one large sub-region, and three Welsh authorities who were known to be facing particular problems.

4 The local authorities who returned our questionnaire were as follows:

Greater London Council

County Borough Councils

Barnsley
Bath
Blackburn
Birkenhead
Birmingham

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Bradford
Bristol
Cardiff
Coventry
Dudley
Ipswich
Leeds
Leicester
Liverpool
Manchester
Newcastle upon Tyne
Newport
Nottingham
Oldham
Plymouth
Portsmouth
Preston
Reading
Rotherham
Salford
Sheffield
Solihull
Southampton
South Shields
Stoke-on-Trent
Sunderland
Teesside
Walsall
Warley
Wallasey
West Bromwich
Wolverhampton

London Borough Councils

Barnet
Bromley
Croydon
Enfield
Hackney
Hillingdon
Islington
Kingston upon Thames
Lewisham
Newham
Southwark
Waltham Forest
Westminster

Municipal Borough Councils

Accrington

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Aldershot
Barry
Bedford
Bideford
Droitwich
Glastonbury
Gravesend
Gosport
Halesowen
Kendal
Leigh
Lichfield
Lowestoft
Morley
Mansfield
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Port Talbot
Scunthorpe
Stourbridge
Sutton Coldfield
Swindon
Tamworth
Weston-super-Mare
Wrexham

Urban District Councils

Aldridge-Brownhills
Ashford
Bala
Bedlingtonshire
Bentley-with-Arksey
Bishop Auckland
Bedwellty
Bromsgrove
Chadderton
Clay Cross
Dawley
Harpenden
Hebburn
Holmfirth
Llwchwr
Neston
Newport
Northallerton
Oundle
Redditch
Rhyl
Stourport-on-Severn

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Turton
Welwyn Garden City

Rural District Councils

Alcester
Amesbury
Basingstoke
Blackwell
Blofield and Flegg
Bromsgrove
Cockermouth
Crickhowell
Easington
Godstone
Horsham
Lleyn
Meriden
Monmouth
Shifnal
Southwell
Swale
Spilsby
Tadcaster
Thingoe
Torrington

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Appendix 3
Public meetings: Experience in one local authority

The following note was submitted to us by one local authority which had had considerable experience in clearance and redevelopment. In view of its relevance to the Sub-Committee's recommendations it was felt that its reproduction would be useful.

1 Immediately following a report to the Council setting out proposals which will displace large numbers of families, the Council expects the appropriate officers to prepare plans for a public meeting.

2 If there is a suitable hall of sufficient capacity within the area in question the meeting is held there so that people do not have to travel to the Town Hall, which provides the alternative venue. Letters are sent to everyone known to be in occupation in the properties concerned or to those whose interest is known, such as landlords who may live elsewhere. In addition, where there is a local residents association (possibly one hurriedly formed to oppose the Council's proposals) the Council's officers will seek their co-operation to ensure the maximum attendance. It is also the practice to post notices throughout the area inviting everyone who is interested to attend the meeting.

3 All these invitations make it quite clear that at the meeting, after an outline of the Council's proposals by the officers, there will be ample opportunity for questions addressed either to the Chairman of the Housing Committee or the Planning Committee or to the Council's Chief Officers. The press are invited as also is the Member of Parliament for the area and the Councillors representing these wards.

4 There has never been lack of response irrespective of good weather or foul or even if the meeting clashes with popular television programmes. The lowest number to attend one of these meetings was 250 persons and the largest meeting had to cater for an overflow in an adjacent committee room when some 800 people turned up. Simple refreshments are provided at the close of each meeting.

5 The meetings follow a regular pattern. The Chair is taken by the Chairman of the Public Relations Sub-Committee who welcomes those present, introduces those present on the platform who will be speaking, and then explains the order of proceedings.

6 The first speaker (Chairman of Committee) explains the Council's housing policy and the demand for housing which they must meet. He explains the lengthy timetable which, from experience, the Council knows it must face and the rights each person has if he or she wishes to oppose the scheme. He ends by explaining the determination of the Council to ensure that everyone is kept as well informed as possible, even if as a consequence the objectors are able to persuade the

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Inspector at the public enquiry that there are alternative proposals which should be considered and the order should not be confirmed. This remark usually alters the tone of the meeting, from one of simple opposition on the part of the audience to a feeling of participation.

7 The Borough Architect and Town Planning Officer then explains the type of development the Council has in mind, i.e. high rise or low rise, high density or medium density, pedestrian precincts, shopping proposals and the like. In some instances, slides have been used to illustrate the types of dwellings the Council is already providing and to show a plan of the area. It is essential to have large scale plans, suitably coloured, placed around the hall so that everyone has ample opportunity to see them.

8 The Housing Manager's contribution consists of detailed explanation of four or five important questions:

(a) Who will be housed
(b) When
(c) Where
(d) At what rent, and
(e) Who pays removal expenses.

In addition, it is normally necessary to explain that in the Borough the Council cannot provide houses with gardens for everyone because of the density to which the Council have to build, and also to explain that as the Council does not consider high density blocks of flats as being suitable for tenants who keep cats and dogs that, if they wish to occupy one of these, they should find another home for their pets before they had to move. If, however, they wished to keep their pets the Council would do its best to offer them a home where they could do so.

9 The meeting is then thrown open for questions from the audience who are, however, warned that if anyone wishes to raise very personal matters they should wait until after the close of formal questions when refreshments are served and the Council's officers are available for consultation. Because of the pent up feelings of those present it has never been found necessary to prompt anyone to ask the first question. Experience shows that a roving microphone is essential, not only to ensure that the question can be heard both by the audience and the platform party, but it also helps the Chairman to control the meeting as he is able to direct the attendant handling the microphone to the person he has chosen for the next question.

10 Typical questions which come up at every meeting are as follows:

(a) Shopkeepers ask about trade falling off as rehousing takes place and if their compensation will reflect this drop in trade.
(b) Landlords ask if they can re-let accommodation which may become vacant.
(c) Owner/occupiers ask how they can oppose the Council's proposals.
(d) Give a definition of compensation for 'fit' and 'unfit' houses.
(e) Give a definition of unfit houses.
(f) What happens to families who move into the area after the date the Council made the C.P.O.?
(g) What happens to owner/occupiers who do not wish to become council tenants, and
(h) Can the Council explain how I can get another mortgage when I shall be sixty next month?

Experience shows that as much time as possible should be given to questions to

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

prevent giving the impression that the meeting is being closed before everyone has a chance to speak. It is as well for the Chairman, in his opening remarks, to say at what time the meeting must end and that refreshments will be served for 30 minutes before the hall is closed.

11 There is no doubt in the minds of both Councillors and Chief Officers of the success of these meetings, and that the policy should continue in spite of the heavy burden it throws on those who sit on the platform.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Appendix 4
Matters to be discussed on a home visit

1 This appendix lists issues which are appropriate for discussion on a home visit. We stress the point made in the body of the report that home visitors should be in a position to provide full and accurate information. Without this, much of the value of a home visit will be lost.

(a) The size and composition of the family.

(b) The rent which can be afforded and whether a rebate is needed.

(c) The type of accommodation which is needed and the range of accommodation which is available.

(d) The area in which re-housing is preferrred.

(e) Whether re-housing in the present area is desirable because of:

- (i) children's schooling;
- (ii) doctor (this applies especially to old people);
- (iii) attendance at a nearby hospital for special treatment (with transport by ambulance);
- (iv) the place of employment of the main wage earner or other members of the family who are working; and/or
- (v) attendance at a local church or membership of a local organisation, or leisure time activities.

(f) Where there are very young children, whether it is essential to remain in the area because there are:

- (i) children attending a day nursery or pre-school play group which may not be available elsewhere; or
- (ii) children fostered out during the daytime to allow the mother to go to work to supplement the family income.

(g) Willingness or otherwise to change children's schooling, doctor, hospital, nursery, church, etc., and the need for help from the local authority in obtaining school places in another area.

(h) Desire to live near present neighbours and/or to return to the present area when new homes have been built.

(i) Arrangements for animals; whether another home can be found for the cat or dog or whether the family wishes to keep it when rehoused. (This may mean that new accommodation cannot be given in a block of flats. Information would be given on the difficulties of keeping pets in high density flatted development.)

(j) Willingness or otherwise to live on high density estates or in tower blocks.

(k) Desire to move completely away from the area, which the local authority may be able to arrange by liaising with another authority.

(l) Willingness to consider accommodation in a New or Expanding Town, which

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

would depend on the husband being provided with suitable employment in the area. (An explanation of priorities for employment should be given.)

(m) Whether there is an elderly parent living on his/her own in the same or another redevelopment area who may have to move shortly and would like rehousing with the family, or whether rehousing nearby on the same estate would be helpful.

(n) Arrangements for a car, for which either a garage or parking space would be necessary.

(o) Problems of the main wage earner who is a shift worker (and who may be troubled by noise during the day).

(p) Arrangements to cover any medical factors or disablement which would make it essential for rehousing to be provided at ground floor level or with lift access, or in a dwelling specially adapted for disabled persons.

(q) In the case of families wishing to buy their own house, whether they need advice on the local authority's mortgage facilities.

(r) Whether the income is sufficient to meet heating and hot water charges in Parker Morris standard dwellings. (Many cases have been found where the family can meet the rent of a new dwelling because of assistance given by means of rent rebates, but cannot afford the fixed expenditure on central heating and hot water.)

(s) Removal arrangements, including the need to contact gas and electricity boards in good time to disconnect supplies and to re-connect at the new address; grants for removal or "disturbance".

(t) Advice that everyone interested should be notified of change of address prior to removal.

Elderly people

2 Some of the above considerations would apply equally to old people, especially those relating to the hospital, doctor or church, etc., but, in the case of the elderly, it will be necessary to consider additionally:

(a) whether there is an elderly friend living elsewhere and whether re-housing near to him/her would be beneficial;

(b) whether there are married children living elsewhere and whether re-housing near to them, if possible, would be an advantage;

(c) whether there are married children in a New Town and whether re-housing in an old person's dwelling in the New Town under the assisted schemes be an advantage;

(d) whether the services of a home help are needed;

(e) whether help is needed in disposing of furniture and in connection with the move itself;

(f) in the case of those who are partially or fully disabled whether help is needed from the Welfare Department;

(g) whether there is a preference for re-housing in the type of accommodation provided for the elderly which has the services of a warden;

(h) whether there are special relatives to be contacted by the Council when the move takes place.

3 The elderly should also be reminded of the necessity to tell the local office of the Department of Health and Social Security of the change of address and the new rent where supplementary benefit is being received.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Appendix 5
A model publication for intending applicants

We lay great stress in our report on the importance of the maximum possible publicity. This appendix reproduces in full a publication on selection methods which we thought was a model of its kind. It should be noted, however, that (in order to keep publicity up to date) the detailed points scheme is published separately. We have not reproduced this here.
Though we strongly support the publication of brochures of this kind, the particular conditions set out should not be regarded as necessarily reflecting our views.

Teesside County Borough Council
Housing Department

Allocation of houses
A Question and Answer Guide to the Points Schemes relating to Applications and Transfers for Housing Accommodation.

Section A—Eligibility

HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR A COUNCIL TENANCY?
You may apply if you *live* in the Teesside County Borough.
If you live elsewhere but *work* in Teesside you may apply.

DOES THE FACT THAT I OWN MY OWN HOUSE (OR AM BUYING IT) PREVENT ME FROM APPLYING?

NO, not if you *need* to be rehoused and so qualify under the Points Scheme. You may dispose of your own house as you see fit after you have been given a Council tenancy.

I AM IN THE REGULAR ARMY/NAVY/ROYAL AIR FORCE. CAN I BE CONSIDERED FOR A TENANCY WHEN I AM DISCHARGED?

YES, but special provisions only apply if you have had at least five years service (unless your earlier discharge is on medical grounds). Otherwise, you are subject to the ordinary rules of the Points Scheme.
If neither you nor your wife had previously lived in the area of one of the authorities which is now Teesside you must produce evidence that you have obtained, or are genuinely seeking employment within the County Borough before you can be classed as an applicant, and accepted for rehousing on discharge from H.M. Forces.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Section B—General queries

WHAT IS A POINTS SCHEME AND WHY IS THERE ONE ANYWAY?

It is a system which gives points for facts and circumstances such as length of application, length of residence in Teesside, overcrowding, serious medical cases, war disability. The object is to put applicants into an orderly queue (or queues, because applicants will be put into the queue relating to their needs and stated choices of area).

A points scheme does not attempt to be the perfect way of letting houses, but it is designed to give a fair and proper chance of being rehoused to all the people needing to be rehoused.

For this reason, the council accept that there may be a small number of cases which require individual consideration because of exceptional circumstances and these will be dealt with by a Housing Management Committee.

CAN I GET PRIORITY FOR A HOUSE ON MEDICAL GROUNDS?

The Medical Officer of Health may recommend outright priority if there is a case of infectious T.B. in the house and he feels it would reduce the risk to other members of the households.

Otherwise, there is no outright priority, but if you have a serious permanent illness (or a member of your family has) which is aggravated by poor housing conditions, it is possible for additional points to be given to your application.

In cases of war disability pensioners, additional points are allowable, according to the percentage disability.

If you are claiming for some measure of priority, just give your Doctor's name and address and brief statement of the illness or disability. Do not send in a medical certificate.

DOES WAR SERVICE HELP MY APPLICATION?

Not of itself—but see Section 'A'.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM UNDER THREAT OF EVICTION?

These are always very difficult cases. A person may be evicted for a number of reasons but they can usually be split into two groups, namely:

(a) through tenants own neglect or default: e.g., rent arrears, or otherwise unsatisfactory tenancy.

(b) through no fault of the tenant: e.g., possession obtained by Court Order for landlords own occupation, service tenancies ending with the termination of employment, sub-tenants simply "put out".

In these circumstances, the Council will not consider rehousing unless a Court Order of Possession has been obtained and even then, the case will be considered on its merits by the Committee.

ONE HEARS IT SAID THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO BE REHOUSED MORE QUICKLY BY MOVING INTO WORSE CONDITIONS. IS IT POSSIBLE?

It is always difficult to prove that such a move is deliberately planned to get more points. The Council have decided, therefore, that if an applicant's living conditions change in such a way as to entitle him to more points, extra points (except those given on medical grounds or because of normal family or age increases) will not be given until he has lived in these conditions for twelve months.

IF I MOVE INTO BETTER CONDITIONS, WILL I LOSE POINTS?

Your points will be re-assessed with every change of circumstance.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

IF I LIVE IN A HOUSE WITHOUT HOT WATER, BATH ETC. DO I GET POINTS ALLOWED FOR LACK OF THESE AMENITIES?

YES, see the Points Scheme for details.

HOW, THEN, DO I APPLY FOR A COUNCIL TENANCY?

If you applied to one of the former authorities which now form Teesside, you should have been sent an application form to complete and return. (If you have not, write in giving details of when you applied and for what).

If you have not previously applied you may obtain an application form from the Housing Department, Town Hall, Thornaby, Teesside.

HOW IS MY APPLICATION ALREADY REGISTERED WITH ONE OF THE ORIGINAL COUNCILS AFFECTED?

All schemes and priorities which previously existed, ceased to be in operation as from 1st August 1968. Your application will be dealt with under the new Teesside scheme, but will of course date from the time when you applied with the old authority.

HAVING APPLIED, IS IT NECESSARY TO MAKE ENQUIRIES REGULARLY?

NO. Make certain, however, that you obtain an acknowledgment of your application and you should wait for not less than a month before asking about this if you have not by then received one.

The only occasions you need write or call are:

1. If your circumstances change in any way.
2. Once every year from month of original application.

In this instance, all you need do is write in, giving your reference number, name and address and say "I wish to continue my application", followed by details of any change of circumstances.

IF I QUALIFY FOR REHOUSING, WHAT SORT OF ACCOMMODATION WILL I GET AND WILL I HAVE ANY CHOICE OF WHERE I WOULD LIKE TO LIVE?

You will be offered accommodation, so far as size is concerned, according to your needs. A young family may be given a house larger than they actually need at the time, to make allowance for a possible increase in the size of the family.

On your application form you will be able to select three estates on which you would like to be rehoused.

The points level of allocation may vary from area to area. For example 60 points may be required to qualify for a house in Area (or Estate) A, but only 50 for Area (or Estate) B.

The same variation of points level of allocation may apply to the various type or size of accommodation to be offered.

The number of points required to qualify for rehousing at any particular time, split into areas and sizes, will be published in Headquarters and Area Offices.

WHAT IF I REFUSE AN OFFER OF TENANCY?

If you refuse the first offer, you will be given a second offer. If you refuse the second offer you will be given a third offer. If all three offers were reasonable and in your areas of choice, and if you refused all three offers, your application will be cancelled.

You can then re-apply but your date of application for assessment of points will be the new date, not the original.

CAN I ASK FOR MY APPLICATION TO BE HELD IN ABEYANCE?

YES. The cancellation provisions will not apply to such a request if it is reasonable.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

I LIVE IN A CLEARANCE AREA. WHAT IS MY POSITION?

If you lived in a house in a Clearance Area on the date when the Council asked the Minister of Housing to make a Clearance Order (this is published in the Press) you will be entitled to be offered a Council house after the Minister of Housing has confirmed the Clearance Order.

If you moved into a house in a Clearance Area after this Press Notice you will not be entitled to be rehoused by the Council.

Section C—The actual points scheme

WHAT ARE THE MAIN FACTORS FOR WHICH POINTS ARE GIVEN?

1. Length of application.
2. Length of Residence (residence in any of the areas which now form Teesside will count).
3. Overcrowding.
4. Living as sub-tenants or lodgers.

ARE THERE ANY OTHERS?

YES, matters like lack of segregation of the sexes, parents forced to live apart, living in low standard houses and serious medical conditions.

Full information regarding these headings of points allocation is contained in the published Points Scheme, a copy of which is given to every applicant.

HOW DO YOU DECIDE WHO IS CONSIDERED FIRST WHEN THERE ARE A LOT OF APPLICANTS WITH THE SAME NUMBER OF POINTS?

Date of application will decide.

IS THERE ANY DIFFERENT SCHEME FOR CONSIDERING APPLICATIONS FOR AGED PERSONS' ACCOMMODATION?

No major difference, except that points will be awarded for under-occupation as distinct from overcrowding.

For example, if an applicant for aged persons' accommodation has a three-bedroomed house the standard might prescribe five persons for it. If there is only one person living in the house, 20 points will be awarded.

Section D—Transfers and exchanges

I AM NOT SATISFIED WITH MY PRESENT COUNCIL HOUSE, HOW DO I GET A MOVE?

By a transfer or an exchange.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

A transfer is a movement whereby you are granted a tenancy of another vacant Council House.

An exchange is a movement whereby you agree with another tenant (who may or may not be a Council tenant) to move into each other's houses. Provided the tenancies are in all respects satisfactory, exchanges are freely approved.

The Council regard exchanges as an arrangement whereby two or more tenants can mutually solve their particular problems. Transfers on the other hand are arranged by the Department to fulfil a definite need on the part of the tenant or to produce a dwelling of a particular type or in a particular area.

HOW DO I APPLY FOR A TRANSFER?

By completing an application form obtainable from the Housing Department.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

WHAT FACTORS ARE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN DECIDING NEED FOR A TRANSFER AND WHO SHOULD BE OFFERED MOVES FIRST?

Pretty much the same factors as apply to an application for a Council House, namely:

(a) Length of Application for Transfer.
(b) Overcrowding.
(c) Under-occupation.
(d) Lack of segregation of the sexes.
(e) Medical reasons.
(f) To be nearer place of work or dependent relatives.

Full details of the Transfer Points Scheme have been published in a separate document and a copy will be given to anybody who asks for one or who applies for a transfer.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Appendix 6
The London Mutual Exchange Bureau

1 This appendix summarises a memorandum submitted to us by the Greater London Council.

2 The Greater London Council has 400 estates with a total of 240,000 dwellings mostly in the London area but 30,000 beyond it, usually within a radius of 30 miles of County Hall. Its tenants have the facility to move—vacancies and other priorities permitting— anywhere within this extended area.

3 Movement can be by transfer or by mutual exchange. Transfer is to an empty dwelling (new or relet) made available by the Council and tenants seek to transfer because of change of family circumstances, family size or job, on account of health considerations, simply because they desire a change or because the Council would like to use their present accommodation and suggests the transfer. The transfer list is 30,000—40,000 and expands slowly despite the fact that some 6,000 transfers are effected each year. Not everyone can be moved by transfer—the Council's resources not being sufficient—and a system of priorities (e.g. health preferences) operates.

4 Because the transfer system cannot cater for everybody, the mutual exchange is important. By this the tenant can solve his own problem. The Council's attitude is therefore, to help him in this and put no obstacle in his way other than those prompted by a landlord's necessary prudence. Some 2,000 mutual exchanges are effected each year, involving 3,000 Greater London Council tenants and 1,000 other tenants, mostly municipal but a few private.

5 In all, therefore, 8,000 transfers and exchanges occur each year involving 9,000 Greater London Council tenants. As in addition, 5,000 tenants vacate entirely, the total movement is 14,000 families out of 240,000, i.e. 6 per cent.[1] This is less than the national average for all tenures but is higher than the average for all council-owned dwellings.

6 Most moves are over relatively short distances, but appropriate machinery is necessary to assist with the longer distance moves. A three-tier system of exchanges has been set up corresponding to the Council's system of local estate management.

(i) *An exchange bureau at County Hall*—for tenants seeking an exchange over a fairly wide distance, e.g. between one or other of the Housing Department's 9 districts or to or from the Provinces.

(ii) *Exchange bureaux at District Offices*—for tenants who are seeking an exchange within the boundaries of the District concerned.

[1] Because of the modernisation of older Greater London Council estates, a further 2,000—3,000 tenants are being decanted each year and if these were added the percentage would become 7.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

(iii) *Exchange bureaux at some of the very large and more distant estates*—for tenants seeking a move within that estate.

7 At the bureaux (ii) and (iii) the tenant's record card indicating the accommodation offered and that needed is held in one office only according to the place from which the tenant wishes to move. These cards are all indexed and flagged with visual aids to facilitate rapid searching. Tenants are invited to call at the appropriate office to inspect the cards and from the information gained to make direct approaches to the tenants with whom they would like to exchange. Because the system is a manual one with the tenant taking the initiative, the maximum decentralization of the records has been attempted that is consistent with the differing distances over which a move is desired. Upwards of 20,000 mutual exchange cards are currently registered of which half are held in the County Hall bureau. Many of these will also be registered for transfers.

8 Over the years various patterns of organization have been tried, including complete centralization and partial mechanisation but none has been found satisfactory. The principal reasons for preferring the present system are five-fold:

(a) tenants desiring to move are often unclear what they want or where they want it. They come asking for one type of accommodation in a particular area, dislike what is offered and evince the strongest interest in a different type of accommodation in another area. The Greater London Council have found that by giving them a free run over the cards in the bureau to which they have come they are able to modify their aims in a fashion that no machine system can do for them;

(b) the tenant can see for himself that he has access to the complete range of tenants seeking an exchange and that if there is none to match his requirements he must accept this. On the other hand, where matching is done by staff, tenants often have the impression that an exchange partner could be found for them if only 'the bureaucrats' would stir themselves. The emphasis placed on this public relation aspect reflects the past experience of the staff attempting to do this search on a tenant's behalf;

(c) tenants can combine a call at the local bureau with a shopping, etc. expedition and feel less frsutrated if it proves fruitless—as it so often does;

(d) even when likely matches are found by a tenant, there is no assurance that the "other party" still wishes to move. This wish can be of an ephemeral character and record cards for this reason contain much "dead wood"; and

(e) the proportion of mutual exchanges which have been matched at a bureau is very small, perhaps 15%. The rest are achieved by other means (see below). It was, therefore, necessary to adopt a system that involved the least staff cost; the present one has best fitted this requirement.

9 The bulk of exchanges are effected in other ways. Contacts—social or employment—are a fruitful source, but newspaper and shop window advertisements seem to be the principal sources of exchanges. Local newspapers and weekly publications are the chief medium for more distant exchanges. It is considered important that nothing should be done to discourage tenants using these methods as well as the official bureau.

10 The primary purpose of the system is to help Greater London Council tenants but since they will be helped by the enlargement of the list of alternatives, the bureaux are open to other council tenants and to private tenants. Only the County Hall bureau contains record cards for exchange applicants from outside the

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

Greater London Council area. An analysis of the County Hall register made in September 1965 showed its composition to be as follows:

Numbers seeking exchange Tenant of	Within London area	Out of London area	Into London area	Total
(1) Greater London Council	6,490 (71%)	520		7,010
(2) London Borough Council	2,260 (25%)	220		2,480
(3) Private Landlord	350 (4%)	30		380
(4) Other Local Authorities			1,500	1,500*
	9,000 (100%)	770	1,500	11,370

*About half were from New and Expanding Towns.

11 From its nature, the system is most suited to simple bilateral exchanges. Multilateral exchanges do take place but these are generally proposed by the Housing Department to help two tenants who want to do a straight swop which is unacceptable to the Council. A more sophisticated system would be needed to increase the number of multilateral exchanges. It was possible when the partially mechanized system was in use before 1959 but the practical results were very meagre. It was only really effective in a small geographical radius, where the parties involved could readily exchange visits.

12 Often a tenant fails to find an exchange partner because what he has to offer is unattractive. It was found in 1965 that half the registered tenants wanted either more or less accommodation than they possessed and this, when taken with geographical and other requirements, possibly made the ordinary bilateral exchange more difficult. Similarly, half lived in bad or unwanted areas of London and desired to move away. So again, they had little to offer in exchange and the prospect of finding a mutual exchange was small. The *transfer* system caters in part for this kind of difficulty. A mutual *exchange* system, however sophisticated, cannot.

Printed in England for Her Majesty's Stationery Office by
McCorquodale & Co., Ltd., London
HM3503 Dd 151564 K60 11/69. McC. 3309

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit